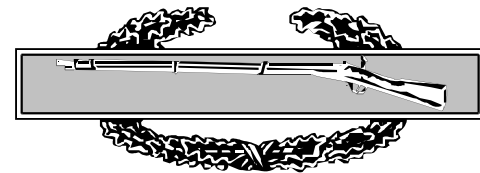


**REMEMBRANCES  
OF THE  
75<sup>TH</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION  
IN  
WORLD WAR II**



**1944-1945**

Answer to Flanders Field; 1945

**“We Sleep”**

Oh list you dead in Flanders Field  
Please hear your buddies plea.  
We too are from that far off land  
Three thousand miles across the sea.  
Like Father, like son we heard the call;  
Our friends in need, our allies Fall.  
The self same road your foot steps trod.

**II**

Did you hear battles thunder and hear Bombs fall?  
No Father it wasn't your echoes at all,  
We have returned, they called again.

**III**

I join you Father in eternal sleep,  
Our work is finished, again we have peace.  
We lay at rest in Henri Chapele,  
In St. Lorent where first we met hell.  
Your sons have joined you,  
Your ranks have swelled.

**IV**

As we look heavenward in our sleep,  
We ask our God the peace to keep  
Let's make one plea Father dear  
That throughout the coming years  
Our sons will guard and safely keep  
Our Victory ————— We Sleep.

By Billy B. Black  
AT Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div  
St. Louis, France 1945

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### ***Personal Vignettes***

The following accounts are selected remembrances of veterans of the 75<sup>th</sup> Division concerning their experiences from the Battle of the Bulge through the end of the war.

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As a lowly squad leader, I didn't always know what, where, why and how of a situation... That whole period of time is very hazy for me. I guess I never really knew what the hell was going on at anytime. To this day, I don't really know how many days we were wandering around lost in the woods...

Don Shanower  
D Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

...I must say that with the numbers of wounded we saw, the crowded little cellar, and the fact that some 88 somewhere used the intersection, just outside of our door, as an aiming point, we kept our heads down. We relieved ourselves only at night when we thought we were safe. There were no cowards in that cellar, but we were scared and completely ignorant of events outside, and we had no idea about where our troops were or what was happening.

Kent Freeman  
Med Det, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup>  
Div

I remember the death, destruction, and misery of the 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup>. I was 19 years old from the hills of Pennsylvania. I believe that chaos and confusion was the order of the day. On these few days, it seemed no one in command had any information as to the enemy. On the 25<sup>th</sup> we got beat around very bad. Twice we lost and had to take it back. The 26<sup>th</sup> shelling was horrible. I was on a forward outpost. I felt very lucky to

0600 in the defensive sector on the left flank. While in the line, the 440<sup>th</sup>'s intelligence personnel was able to examine two prime intelligence acquisitions: a 17 car flak train, with 120mm Anti-Aircraft guns, 4 cars with multiple mount 20mm Anti-Aircraft guns, a radar car, a height finder, and officer's quarters complete with bar, and the Anti-Aircraft Artillery fire direction center for the city of DORTMUND, with its instruments, maps, and equipment.

At 2300, Operational Instructions No. 6 to Field Order No. 15 Headquarters XVI Corps ordered the division to assemble in the vicinity of WALTROP. The 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division relieved the division by 1950 on 14 April. Movement to the assembly area near BRAMBAUER was commenced on 15 April and the last unit - the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry - closed there at 1445 on 17 April. Rehabilitation of personnel and equipment began.

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still be on the move on the 27<sup>th</sup>... A horrible Christmas 1944 – it gives Christmas ever since a special meaning.

David Sangrey  
E Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

We saw the American bombers going into Germany. Lord!! The sky was absolutely full of them! The first couple of formations had several shot down and we would very apprehensively call for parachutes. We saw several airmen jump and only 2 or 3 were able to jump from some of the bombers that were going down... After seeing bombers being shot down and our airmen apparently killed, those fox holes didn't seem too bad. This thought from an ex-air cadet. One of the sergeants said, "The ex-cadets quit bitching so much about being in the infantry after that."

William Blincoe  
F Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

...We were firing into the woods at the sound of machine pistol or rifle fire. We advanced slowly, dropping and firing when fired upon... occasionally we could see the enemy retreating and firing through the thinning woods and we would drop and return fire. We moved in this fashion until we could see a partial clearing ahead and their firing had ceased... it was then that we came upon another group (6-8) that was prone and firing at an enemy soldier on the ground ahead of them. He was visible in the woods maybe 20 yards away. He raised his arm and someone in the other group told the prone group of men to fire. They did. We did not. When both groups continued the advance again, it was discovered that the dead enemy soldier was the Exec. (1<sup>st</sup> Lt William R. Adcock) wearing his grey-green trench coat.

R. H. Barnhart  
F Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

This was my first sight of death and destruction. It occurred when we walked into the village of Soy and I saw a soldier standing near a burning tank and two American soldiers lying in the street- dead. The live soldier was a member of the Airborne (1<sup>st</sup> Bn 517<sup>th</sup> Para Inf Regt or 509<sup>th</sup> Para Inf Bn) and he greeted us by saying, "Merry Christmas, Welcome to Hell!"

Russell Vedeloff  
H Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

...I stepped out of the door of our OP just as a 120 mortar round hit the icy ground, 10 yards from me – I was showered with ice, mud and snow and my ears rang for an hour, but I didn't have a scratch... another round landed between two cows as Jimmy Butz was coming back to the OP with his arms full of C rations. The blast knocked him through a door and down a cellar stair where he lay unconscious for several minutes. When he came to, he was covered with blood, but it wasn't his – it was the cows!

Donald Roeck  
H Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

On Christmas day, after a delicious meal of frozen franks and beans, and after having endured several severe shellings as I lay face down in the snow with 6 mortar rds. strapped to my back, we finally, after more praying than I had ever done in my life, made it into that little village of Wy. The house we selected for our OP was on the forward slope facing the German lines and one little, rotund Belgian farmer was still in residence. During the night, we used a big earthenware crock, that sat by the door, as a convenient latrine. In the morning, the farmer took the crock out to the barn across the road, emptied it and proceeded to milk his cows.

Donald Roeck  
H Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

## FOURTEENTH DAY - 13 APRIL

By 2350, as word of the President's death was coming to fighting units, all elements had reached the division's final objective. DORTMUND had been surrounded, and the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was able to enter and invest it without opposition other than from snipers.

On the right, the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry was relieved on the river line by elements of the 313<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 315<sup>th</sup> Infantry, of the 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at 1840. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion was relieved at the same time by the 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion. The 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry gained its objective near HERDECKE at 2000, aided by an air support bombing and strafing mission on a strong point. HERDECKE formally surrendered at 1000 on 14 April when W. Niemenn, Burgermeister, signed the following document:

I formally surrender unconditionally the town of HERDECKE to the Allied Military Forces at 1000, 14 April 1945. It is understood that from this time until further orders the control of this town will be by the Allied Forces and strict compliance with directives is a prerequisite. Any violation of these directives will be handled by allied military authorities in accordance with military law.

The surrender of HERDECKE had originally been planned for the afternoon of 13 April. A delegation led by Lieutenant Colonel Gleason, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion commander, went to meet a German delegation at a demolished railway bridge on the edge of town. Travelling in several jeeps, the party reached the rendezvous, only to be immediately shelled by guns located south of the RUHR. After being pinned down for some time, all personnel and vehicles were infiltrated out of the town.

The 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry was relieved by elements of the 313<sup>th</sup> Infantry on 14 April.

The 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry reached its final objective west of WESTHOFEN at 2350. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was relieved by the 440<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion at

a mine and factory in the town was knocked out by an air strike. Other strong points in the town were reduced by direct fire from tank destroyers of Company C, 654<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion. Patrols dispatched down the road southwest of BRECHTEN failed to find the enemy.

The XXIX Tactical Air Command flew successful close support missions for the 320<sup>th</sup> Infantry and the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry against strong points, artillery positions, and enemy troops, resulting, in the destruction of five to ten motor vehicles.

### **THIRTEENTH DAY - 12 APRIL**

The division continued the attack at 0700, making slow advances to the southwest against stubborn resistance and over difficult hilly terrain. The 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, now in contact, continued to attack west and south, while the 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, on the right, reached the north bank of the RUHR River.

On the right, the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry defended the north bank of the RUHR, relieving the 137<sup>th</sup> Infantry, of the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, at 2330. Next in line, the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry cleared several towns including RUDINGHAUSEN, SCHEMEE, GROSS-HOLTHAUSERMARK, and LOTTRINGHAUSEN, against heavy artillery and small arms, reaching the RUHR River by 1105. An enemy counter attack at 1335 was repulsed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion mortars. The 75<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Troop was attached to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion at 1300 to reconnoiter routes, but it encountered organized resistance and was held up until its relief at 1800.

The 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry advanced slowly against stubborn resistance, taking PERSEBECK and MENGLINGHAUSEN. The 320<sup>th</sup> Infantry was relieved by the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the 75<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Troop, and assembled near WALTROP preparatory to reverting to the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. During the day, the division command post opened at CASTROP RAUXEL.

We board 40 and 8 box cars (40 Hommes et 8 Cheveaux) at Pepinster south of Liege for a two day trip to Luneville, 25 miles southeast of Nancy. First night aboard, the train almost blown from the tracks by V1 buzz bombs aimed at Leige. Weather is still cold and miserable and those box cars are drafty as hell! We understand a little of the misery the European Jews and slave laborers must have endured as they were herded east to the Stalags and extermination camps.

Donald Roeck  
H Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

We take over a Stalag with 2,132 POWs, of which 1,247 are Russian; also a slave labor camp with approximately 2,500 slave laborers (French, Polish, Hungarian, Czechs, etc.)... the things that remain with me forever about that camp are 1) their emaciated condition, 2) the STENCH and 3) the horrendous living conditions.

Donald Roeck  
H Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

...we thank you very much for letting us know where our son is buried... we sure miss Ralph as he was our only child...

Letter from Chauncey & Mary Huston to Lt. H. Woodrome,  
July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1945

...our bombers, on the way to Germany, dumped a lot of tinsel on us which I thought was for Christmas. It was not. It was to interfere with their radar... we did not get our Christmas turkey until either the 26<sup>th</sup> or the 27<sup>th</sup> of December. The Germans somehow zeroed in on the cooks and their big kettles – everybody had dirt on their mess kits and on the turkey.

William De Vilbis  
H Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

...I wish to thank you for visiting my son's grave... I have pictured his grave in my mind so many times – now I can feel different about it... it is so hard to give Frank up, but I am trying to be brave and look at it in the right way... I had hoped and prayed for him to come through but God did not see it my way.

Letter from Mrs. Myrtle Gillispie to Lt. H. Woodrome,  
July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1945

It was very kind of you to write, and we truly appreciate your letter. A friend of ours, Capt. Balding, went to Davis' grave and had flowers planted and a very kind sergeant sent me some snapshots...

V-Mail from Mrs. C.J. Payson to Lt. H. Woodrome,  
July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1945

Bishop and I started up the left side of the hill, entered the treeline and came into an open area. As we crossed it, we came under machine gun fire. We both hit the ground and commenced firing at what we thought was the source. Either we were mistaken or there were two MGs. In any case, a MG firing from our flank sent a burst across Bishop's chest, killing him, and hit me in the left hip and thigh. I rolled over into a slight depression and as I lay there trying to figure my next move, I came under rifle fire. The first shot missed, the second hit my right calf and ricocheted up my leg. Turning my head I found myself staring down a machine gun barrel about fifty feet away. The gun crew indicated I should surrender. I did.

David Clagett  
L Co Commander, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf  
Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

the east looking for a place to cross.

The rest of the Infantry walked across the railroad tracks. Just south of the tracks an enemy company of 63 men surrendered. They said they heard us shooting and heard our artillery.

Stubborn small arms, mortar, and machinegun fire at WERNE was overcome at 1700 by the use of the flame throwing Crocodiles of B Squadron, First Fife and Fofar Yeomanry. Roadblocks covered by antitank guns were established.

To the left, the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry took KLEYL, DUREN, and STOCKUM before it went into a defensive position for the night at 2230. The 320<sup>th</sup> Infantry noticed enemy elements retiring south towards DORTMUND. Enemy resistance was obviously slackening.

#### **TWELFTH DAY - 11 APRIL**

The enemy continued to withdraw south of the RUHR River, meanwhile fighting a stubborn delaying action north of WITTEN. The day's attack plan gave the main assignment to the 290<sup>th</sup> and 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, with the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry to hold until later in the day. On the right, the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry broke through light resistance to reach the RUHR River, at 1150. One entire company of 49 men surrendered to Company E. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion cleared KNAPP by 2100. As Company K approached the bridge in its area, enemy elements succeeded in blowing it up.

To the left, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry had WITTEN cleared by 1600. Two bridges were found intact, and were placed under guard. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion repulsed a counter attack at 1300. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion attacked east toward ANNEN, aided by an air strike. Hard fighting was met at Gestapo headquarters there.

The 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry, less one battalion, passed through the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry's left and attacked south at 1730, taking EICHLINGHOFEN. The 320<sup>th</sup> Infantry cleared BRECHTEN, southeast of BRAMBAUER. Small arms fire emanating from

the operation, its 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion received two counter attacks. The first, launched by two, infantry companies and automatic weapons at 1530, was stopped before it penetrated our position. The second, made by 100 infantry supported by three to five tanks, was turned back at 1835 by artillery, Company G's infantry and tank-air cooperation, which combined to account for two of the tanks. Twenty-seven German bodies were counted on the spot the next day. Air support also bombed and strafed an enemy train in the area. The 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry edged nearer to DORTMUND, entering DOPSTFEL. On the left, Company C 320<sup>th</sup> Infantry received a counter attack at 1700, which was turned back by artillery fire.

The 1153d Engineer Group placed a floating treadway bridge over the LIPPE River northeast of WALTROP and a Bailey bridge over the ZWEIGKANAL at MECKINGHOVEN.

#### **ELEVENTH DAY - 10 APRIL**

The 90<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's drive west from SOEST progressed so rapidly that the 75<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Troop was able to establish contact with it east of BRAMBAUER at 2100. On the right, the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division continued to enlarge its ZWEIGKANAL bridgehead. By the close of the period, the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry was almost entirely screened by the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, enabling the 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion to clear the barriers it had erected on the right flank.

In the center, the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry had also made contact with the 105<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division by 1930. It captured SOMBORN, WERNE, WILHEMHOHE, and LANGEN DREER. 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant F. B. Blackwell, commanding Company E, describes one engagement north of LANGEN DREER:

We were advancing under marching fire, moving with the Tank Destroyers that shot at every building. We had learned that there was at least one sniper in every building.

When we got to the railroad yards at LANGES DREER, the Tank Destroyers could not cross over them so part of the company got on the Tank Destroyers and they went off toward

...the battalion was ordered to the Colmar district in the Vosge mountains of central eastern France. For reasons which are now no longer with me, I became lost in the mountains, driving my jeep for several days in places I will never know. When finally I caught up with M Company, it was on the move, and no one was aware that I had been missing.

Ken Sipser  
M Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

In a curve in the road, the map showed mines. It was mines tied together by wire, forming a chain – daisy chain – that when pulled across the road, blocked it. Soldiers earlier in the day had picked the mines up and moved them to the edge of the road. Snow and ice had frozen the fuses and spider top of the mines and they could not be defused. The spot was marked appropriately with stakes and engineer's tape. They were fenced off. The column of tanks (ours) moving out met another tank at the spot the mines were stacked. One tank turned sharply to the right and veered into the snow bank where the mines were stacked. The bomb-like explosion blew the turret off the tank and all five occupants were killed.

Bill Black  
Mine Anti-Tank Co, 290<sup>th</sup> Inf  
Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

A German came up to A Co., next to my right flank, and was halted by an A Co. man. The German said, "Don't shoot...it's John," then jumped in the A Co. man's hole and shot him with a machine pistol. The German then jumped out of the hole and ran in front of our B.A.R. team and was killed. This started the real attack which lasted until morning. They assaulted our positions three times with bayonets. We held.

Joseph McClure  
C Co, 289<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

...there was a tank that came up to the edge of the river every night but, never shot at anything. So, inquisitive as I was, I asked the guys with the tank crew what kind of tank it was. It had a very wide muzzle and was always covered completely on the top. Anyway, I was told that this was an infrared light that was thrown across the river and we had several sharpshooters picking off a few selected Germans... I also saw this sergeant release several pigeons while I was there and was told that if there were any message carrying enemy pigeons, they would be intercepted by these trained birds and flown back to its base and all messages taken would be sent on to Intelligence Headquarters. Nice job for a staff sergeant.

Steve Goss  
CN Co, 289<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

The chow situation was very serious. The kitchen was in Heyd and we ate C-rations for all of our meals, except four in the two weeks or more that we were there. I went back to Heyd to get the mail each day and sometimes got there in time to get some hotcakes which the cooks seemed to always have frying. They would cook them as long as I would eat them. I usually took about ten.

Harold Shadday  
CN Co, 289<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

The first or second night we were there, we go on a fire mission, as I remember, around midnight. Being the No. 3 man, or loader, I took pride in the fact that day or night, I had never missed putting that shell where it was supposed to go with enough force so that George Dodds could close that breach with very little effort. This night was different. There was confusion; there were incoming rounds; it was so dark with the fog and snow. This was combat. The first two rounds went in

timatum that brought in scores of prisoners. On the long left flank, the 320<sup>th</sup> Infantry relieved the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry at 0010 and continued its defense.

### **TENTH DAY – 9 APRIL**

Meanwhile, the 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's sweep in the ESSEN area was progressing, and the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, on the right flank of the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, was maintaining a sizeable bridgehead on the east bank of the ZWEIG Canal. From the new division command post at ICKERN, the attack to the south and southwest was ordered to be continued. Against stubborn resistance, only small gains could be recorded.

On the right, the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry continued its defense, preparing roadblocks and other barriers with the aid of the 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion. In this area, Major Charles S. LeCraw, Jr., Division Provost Marshal, Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Max T. Reed, and Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Henry H. Weiss, Jr., Military Police Platoon, performed action that earned for them Silver Star Medal awards. With a group of military police, Major LeCraw was investigating a house reported to contain civilian snipers. When enemy fire opened up, the group was forced to take cover, but Major LeCraw and Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Reed ran across 200 yards of open field under fire to return with two tanks. One tank was hit and Major LeCraw was wounded and forced to withdraw.

After securing 1<sup>st</sup> aid, he returned and directed mortar fire and artillery to give protection to his men so they could withdraw. Private 1<sup>st</sup> Class Weiss volunteered to try a subterfuge to secure badly needed assistance. With four civilians to help deceive the enemy, he put on civilian clothes over his uniform and with exceptional coolness walked across an open field at normal rate, even after the enemy fired upon the group, and was able to give the location of enemy installations to our artillery, whose fire enabled the besieged group to withdraw to safety.

The 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry cleared LUTGEN-DORTMUND. In

RAUXEL. A thermite grenade was employed to burn down a house sheltering a sniper. Early that morning, Company G was encircled by enemy infiltrations, but its relief was effected after two hours.

Just to the left of the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry, the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry passed through elements of the 290<sup>th</sup> and 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiments, and made a considerable advance before running into a counter attack at 2000 consisting of infantry and two Mark IV tanks. While the counter attack was turned back at 2030, the advance had to be halted to permit reorganization for the attack the next morning. Hard fighting north of LUTGEN-DORMUND is described by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant William S. Fleisher, Leader, 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Company K:

We crossed the railroad tracks above LUTGEN-DORTMUND with Company K on the left and Company L on the right of the road. We were about eight buildings deep in the town when a machine gun opened up and killed two of our men. We spread out. A squad from Company L was about five buildings down on its side of the road. Part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was in a building near us. We were all getting fire from machineguns and panzerfausts. I was trying to protect our flank and got pinned down. The third platoon was in a building close to its. At midnight we got a counterattack from paratroops with panzerfausts and grenades.

They threw grenades in the windows of the buildings we were in and, yelled for us to surrender. The 1st Platoon suffered eight or nine casualties. Artillery started coming in and hit all around us, but it drove off the enemy and we had no more trouble that night.

Farther to the left, the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry, after clearing several towns, received an enemy infantry and artillery counter attack, supported by one tank, at 1520. The counterattack was repulsed with artillery support, and a XXIX TAC air cooperation mission which bombed and strafed enemy troop and gun positions. The 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry Commanding Officer, Colonel Carl F. Duffner, taking the microphone of the psychological warfare sound truck, broadcast in German a surrender ul-

perfectly, Dodds locked the breach block and fired. The next round, as I drove it forward into the breach, missed and hit the edge of the breach block with the nose of the round, with a bang. Everybody stopped – dead silence around the gun while everybody waited for the explosion. Sgt. White called out, “Let’s go,” and the round slid into the breach block and George Dodds locked the breach block and fired when White called, “fire.” I never missed again.

Louis Sullivan  
A Bty, 289<sup>th</sup> Inf Reg, 75<sup>th</sup> Div

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### **A Soldier's Tale**

Harold Lindstrom  
 Assistant Mortarman  
 Mortar Section 4th Platoon  
 F Co 2d Bn 289th Infantry Regiment  
 75th Infantry Division  
 24, 25, 26, 27 & 28 Dec 44

There were houses along the road which probably was the small village of Briscol. I and a large group of the Company rested on a courtyard of a large building. A battery of 105 mm artillery guns was set up and firing as fast as they could in a wooded area about 100 yards from us. Their range was pretty far out but the Germans must be pretty close. By now we were all extremely tired, hungry, thirsty, and what have you. While lying on the courtyard concrete, one of the riflemen said, "God Damn, I almost wish the "Heinies" would capture us. At least we then may get some rest. It surely can't be any worse." We were all very miserable.

We were finally told to enter some of the houses and get some rest. We fell asleep anywhere we could find a decent spot. Frank pushed a small-table between two windows and laid down on it. He thought this way he could quickly jump out a window and get into the open, if attacked by artillery fire or whatever. After a few hours of rest we were told that the "Heinies" had broken through and were advancing toward us. We were deployed into defensive positions. Some went out and dug fox holes in nearby fields. A couple of guys and I were stationed at an open second floor bedroom window with a machine gun. We were told that there was a bazooka team in a building next to a road ahead us where the Germans would probably come into the village. If the bazooka team should knock out a tank we should fire at the crew when attempting to get out it. I sat there and looked out that open window all

arms fire near WESTERFILDE, tanks were employed to break the way for the infantry.

On the left, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry relieved the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry before 0600, and had reached the line alone, the DORTMUND-EMS Canal by 1600. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions of the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry constituted the division reserve.

The 320<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division relieved the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry and elements of the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry on the long left front stretching north to the LIPPE River. Division artillery and an air strike discouraged an enemy build-up in the woods east of BRAMBAUER.

The division artillery assisted the air cooperation missions by marking the targets with smoke. The 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, supported by 1153<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Group, placed a Bailey bridge over the EMSCHER Canal northwest of ICKERN, assisted at night by the lights of Company B, 739<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion (Special). The Reconnaissance Troop was relieved of its mission of patrolling the exposed area on the ZWEIG Canal by the 317<sup>th</sup> Infantry at 2230, and reverted to division reserve. The XXIX TAC flew the three close support missions already described, two reconnaissance missions to establish enemy build-ups, and various general support missions, with four squadrons employed. Targets included three towns, one artillery CP, one liaison plane, one troop train, six gun positions, sixteen trucks, and foot elements.

### **NINTH DAY - 8 APRIL**

The enemy continued to resist heavily, particularly on our right flank. Before dawn, he was harassing our whole front with artillery, self-propelled gun, and mortar fire. Nevertheless, it was a day of outstanding tactical success, resulting in the capture of the main railway line from DORTMUND west, and of several important highways as well as the towns of LUTGEN-DORTMUND, WESTRICH, and several other towns and villages.

On the right, the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry cleared CASTROP-

expected the other's attack, a true meeting engagement resulted and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Division assumed the defensive.

### **EIGHTH DAY - 7 APRIL**

While the 79<sup>th</sup> Division was crossing the HERNE Canal between ESSEN and GELSENKIRCHEN and advancing 2000 yards, the division made substantial gains throughout its front. The enemy employed all caliber of fixed antiaircraft weapons in direct fire roles. The most stubborn opposition so far met was put up by the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Regiments of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Division. It was the toughest fighting we've experienced; worse than the Ardennes Bulge and the Colmar Pocket, was the comment of Major Eugene O. McDonald, Executive Officer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry on this phase.

On the right, the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry cleared most of CASTROP RAUXEL after difficult fighting. Company B destroyed one enemy self-propelled gun. Work on roadblocks and defensive positions on the right flank continued.

In the center, the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry aptly used its air and artillery support. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, on the left, attacking south at 0530, encountered heavy enemy resistance. At 1610 a coordinated attack with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion on its right was launched after a 15-minute artillery preparation and an air strike. The towns of FROLINDE and KIRCHLINDE were so vigorously treated that the infantry was able to move in practically unopposed on the heels of the air bombardment. At 1730, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was counterattacked by two infantry companies with self-propelled guns moving north from DORTMUND along the railroad.

The counterattack was broken up by fire from the battalion's machine, and mortars, by time fire from four artillery battalions, and by an air strike carried through by a squadron then in the air on another mission. The air squadron, guided by colored smoke laid down by the artillery, bombed and strafed the enemy troops and gun positions with excellent results. When the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion found itself pinned down by enemy small

night. It was very cold and miserable. I was relieved when the morning sun finally came up without anything happening.

Earlier the day before, I observed an awesome demonstration of our air power. Up to now Hitler's Armies had enjoyed partial immunity from our air strikes. The weather had been foggy ever since they had begun their attack and our pilots could not see them from the air. That day the weather finally cleared and Allied planes were out in mass. The U.S. sent about 2,000 planes out to attack German positions. Hundreds of B-17 Bombers flew overhead toward the German lines. Their engines made an almost constant drone and the sky was almost white with the many vapor trails.

Word spread among us that they were going to bomb the German spearhead ahead of us. Some of the men yelled in joy. They hollered up at the planes, "Cream the bastards". I heartedly agreed. Shortly after that we walked by a large number of pine trees that had shiny silver colored aluminum tinsel hanging from their branches. I couldn't believe it. The snow covered decorated trees looked just like Christmas trees! It was a weird contrast to the miserable war setting that we were in. Our planes released the tinsel to confuse German radar.

The next day after I had spent the night in front of that open bedroom window with a machine gun was Christmas Day, December 25. We walked on down the road out of town. We met jeeps with wounded men in them. They were either sitting in the back seat or laying on the hood with bloody bandages on various parts of their bodies. I saw one with a bloody stump for an arm. We were getting close to the fighting! I was now frightened and apprehensive about my immediate future.

Late that afternoon we walked by a mess on the road. There were several American jeeps that had been crushed down to an almost unrecognizable approximate 3 ft. high pile of twisted metal and crushed glass. It looked like they had been run over by German Tanks. Also there were several U.S. Army Trucks off to the left side of the road in a clump of trees that had burned out. Their tires were still burning. The

worst part was the G.I. equipment spread around on the road. There were helmets, canteens, weapons, packs, eye glasses and what have you. There were no bodies or wounded men around. Apparently they had been evacuated. It was scary to see equipment just like that I was using. They had to have been guys just like me.

I didn't know it at the time, but they were K Company of our 3rd Battalion. That evening when we were in that town waiting for the Germans, these guys were walking and driving their vehicles down this road. In the darkness they met about 10 American tanks. They didn't think too much of it. A few minutes later 8 German tanks came down the road behind them. It was dark so they didn't recognize the tanks to be German. The Germans didn't recognize the soldiers on the road to be American.

When practically abreast the Americans spied the German cross on the side of the tanks. They opened fire with their machine guns. A German standing up out of the turret of one of the lead tanks shouted out in German, "We are lost." The Germans then opened up with their machine guns and cannon. Many Americans were killed or wounded but miraculously many escaped by running up a hill along side the road.

Our planes, P-38's, strafed and bombed Grandmenil. Unfortunately they also hit K Company, which was on the edge of the village. Later Joe Pat Ward told us about a K Company soldier knocking out a German tank with a bazooka.

On Christmas Day, December 25, the 289th Infantry Regiment was organized for an attack with the three Battalions on line; 3rd Battalion on the left, 2nd Battalion (the one I was in) in the center, and 1st Battalion on the right. We (F Company of the 2nd Battalion) were supposed to take the high ground about 1,500 yards south of the Erezee - Grandmenil road. The attack was to begin at 8:00 A.M. By 6:00 P.M. that night, 1st and 3rd Battalions on either side of us had reached their objective. The 2nd Battalion had trouble keeping its direction and contact with the other two Battalions on either side of it. F Company had the most trouble. We had wandered to

tive.

During the night, the 290<sup>th</sup> and 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiments passed through the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry to occupy their lines of departure for the next day's attack. The 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, now supported by the 1153<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Group, established causeways over the DORTMUND-EMS Canal south of DATTELN, and over the ZWEIG Canal south of MECKINGHOVEN.

### SEVENTH DAY – 6 APRIL

To direct the new phase, Division Headquarters moved to MECKINGHOVEN. After a 30-minute artillery preparation, the division attacked at 0700. It soon became apparent that the enemy was defending fiercely.

On the right, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry found itself pinned down by heavy enemy fire. At 1420 an enemy counter attack by paratroopers with supporting artillery, self-propelled guns, and anti-aircraft, was repulsed by our own artillery. In the center, the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry cleared OSTRICK, DINGEN, BODELSCHWINGH, and dug in for the night at 2000 as resistance stiffened. On the left, the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry secured the division's left flank along the DORTMUND-EM'3 Canal. The light opposition met would have permitted a further advance, but the attack was halted north of DEUSEN in order to conform the line to the front of the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Companies E and G received a tank-infantry counter attack at 1600, which was repulsed with the loss of one enemy tank. Elements of the 320<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the 35<sup>th</sup> Division and of the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry commenced the relief of the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry, which was completed at 0600 on 7 April. The 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry was in division reserve. The 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion continued bridging over the ZWEIG Canal. Enemy prisoners statements indicated that the numerous attacks made on the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry during the day were part of a coordinated attack intended to be made on our position by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Division. This attack was broken up by the attack of the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry. As neither had

the zone. 559 prisoners reached the division cage by 1800, with 300 more before midnight - a record day's haul for the division up to that time.

Division artillery uncovered what was apparently a Werewolf cache of weapons near ESSEL, where over 100 rifles and two boxes of ammunition, protected against water, were found in the deep end of a swimming pool.

### **3. Third Phase**

#### **SIXTH DAY - 5 APRIL**

The division spent the day straightening the left half of its lines. The 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry, resuming the attack at 0700, had broken through BRAMBAUER by 1025. It relieved the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry in its zone by 2140. The Reconnaissance Troop relieved the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry of its patrol duties along the west bank of the ZWEIG Canal at 2340.

At 2000, Field Order No. 15, Headquarters, XVI Corps, setting forth the third phase of the campaign, was issued. With the 95<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Divisions advancing west from the HAMM-SOEST area, the Corps plan envisaged a drive through the RUHR. The 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division was to slash down to the RUHR River just west of DORTMUND, thus isolating most of the RUHR area, cutting lines of communication, and preventing movement between DORTMUND and the west. The 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, on Corps order, was to cross the RHINE-HERNE Canal and split GELSENKIRCHEN and ESSEN. The 17<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, on the 79<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's right, and the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, between it and the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, were to seize whatever chance presented itself to effect further breakthroughs to the RUHR River. At the same time, First Army elements, spearheaded by the III Corps, began to drive from the south and east of the pocket.

G-2 reported the 180th and 190th Wehrmacht Divisions, with approximately 2000 and 3000 combat soldiers respectively, stood between the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and its objec-

the north and were in the 3rd Battalion sector in front of Grandmenil instead of La Fosse where we were supposed to be.

That night was a beautiful Christmas night. The light from a bright shining moon glistened off the white clean snow. We were walking single file on a narrow road on a side hill. I was very tired from constantly being on the go the past few days. I had reached a point that surprised me. In normal conditions, I would have been too tired to keep going. I would have stopped to rest long ago. Now things were different. I was in the Army and didn't have the choice.

There was a small clump of trees about 300-400 yards up the hill to our right. About 1/2 mile ahead and down the hill to our left was the small Belgium village of Grandmenil. There were not many trees or obstructions blocking my view of the village, so I could see that many of the buildings were on fire. I heard machine gun fire and saw tracer bullet streaks shooting back and forth from inside the village to a position outside the village.

This ringside view of the War fascinated me. What I was watching was the fight between K Company of our 3rd Battalion (the Company that had been overrun by German tanks the night before) and the Germans. Those that survived the attack went on and took the village but were later driven out by a German counter-attack supported by two German tanks.

K Company withdrew to the outskirts and were now exchanging fire with the Germans in the village. Up to now we had not been fired upon, except for that "buzz bomb" attack in Liege. Somehow I presumed our good fortune would last and I wouldn't be fired on now. Suddenly my unrealistic thinking was shattered. I couldn't believe it but a German machine gun was firing at us! I heard the sharp crack of a gun being fired at me and saw tracer streaks about 3 ft. above the ground and across the road ahead of me.

Instantaneously, I awoke from my dull dream world and looked for cover. There was no ditch, or protection by the

road but I spotted a slight terrace level a short distance to my right up the side hill and slightly ahead of me. There was a fence next to the road but I went through it as though it didn't exist. I hit the ground on top of the terrace just as the Germans fired again. They swept the area from my right to left with a long machine gun burst. They probably couldn't pick out any individual lying on the ground but knew approximately where we were. I was plenty worried. I was sure they could see me with my dark uniform lying on that gleaming white snow in the bright moonlight. I felt like a duck in a pond.

When I ran ahead to lay on that terrace I also ran ahead of the guys I was walking with in the 2nd mortar squad. They were laying on the ground to my left in the direction we came from. Ralph Logan who was carrying the mortar hit the ground in the approximate vicinity where he had been walking. He positioned the mortar so that its base plate stood on end in front of his head. It was a good thing he did. Some of the bullets in one of the machine gun sweeps hit the base plate and ricocheted up over his head! I heard the clashing of metal and saw sparks when the bullets hit it. I also saw tracers streaks of bullets ricocheting up over his head.

After one of the machine gun sweeps I heard someone squirming and moaning to my left. He had been hit. I laid there long enough so that the snow melted under me and the moisture came up through my clothes. I began feeling very cold. I was deathly afraid but somehow felt comforted to know my buddies were laying out there with me. I wasn't alone.

Finally our platoon leader, Lavern Ives, who was an "old" 35 year old regular Army man, called out, "Men, we can't lay here all night and wait to get hit. Immediately after a burst sweeps by you, start crawling up the hill toward that clump of trees." Boy! that was comforting to receive some directions. Up to now, I just laid there not knowing what to do. I didn't dare crawl away on my own.

Now that Lavern Ives told us what to do I waited for that next machine gun sweep. The Germans hadn't fired for a while but I never knew when they would fire again, so I waited.

firing an 88mm antitank gun point blank at us from our right flank down the road that leads west out of the town. The second platoon had some light machineguns attached and they put down a base of fire on the gun crew from a position north of the gun. Then a squad crawled up a hedgerow along the side of the road and killed or wounded the gun crew. The gun was captured intact. They just kept on going and reached the railroad below HAOING HORST that day.

When it became clear that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry would not be able to cross the DORTMUND-EMS Canal as rapidly as expected, Colonel Douglas B. Smith ordered the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion to cross at 0230. The battalion was temporarily halted by the obstacle of the EMSCHER Canal, but it found a ford at 1645, crossed, and seized ICKERN, its objective. Captain J. G. Remes, S-3, 2d Battalion, reported:

On the outskirts of ICKERN, an 88mm gun was seen covering an autobahn underpass. The platoon leader of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, Company G, sent Staff Sergeant Baker and nine men to wipe out the 88. It was set in shrubbery and covered by snipers. The squad picked off the snipers and the Germans saw they would have to give up, so they tried to demolish the gun. One splinter hit Sergeant Baker, wounding him. The Germans were captured. In ICKERN, there were three 20mm flak guns and an 88mm gun on a corner. There was an ammunition trailer, fully loaded, nearby. Our artillery fired in and hit the trailer. The ammunition exploded and the trailer burned. Company E captured 12 men around the 88 and knocked out the flak wagons.

During the crossing of the DORTMUND-EMS Canal, the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry was in division reserve, except one battalion defending the west bank of the canal. Division artillery supported the attack by a 30-minute preparation commencing at 00'00. The Reconnaissance Troop established contact between the 15<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Group on the north bank of the LIPPE River, and the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry. The 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, supported by the 202<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Battalion, started to prepare fords and bridge launching sites across the various canals in

of action 12 to 15 enemy machine guns. It was past HAOINGHORST by 1630. Company K had a fight near the Autobahn and saved the battalion some casualties by turning south and cleaning out the Germans there. Company L moved down on the right of Company K. The two companies had a hard fight for HENRICHENBURG. A platoon of Company K going through an underpass saw another platoon coming, in from the opposite direction. At first the men thought the other platoon was friendly, but soon saw it was a German unit. About the same time each platoon yelled to the other to surrender. The Company K platoon took many of the Germans prisoner. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant D. L. Smith, Leader, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Company K, described the action:

This platoon was the last of the company to cross the ZWEIGKANAL. We received a report that the other platoons were being attacked from the rear. The forward platoons had taken cover along the ditch beside the road that leads into HEINRICHENBURG from, the north. My 3<sup>rd</sup> squad also took cover in the ditch on the east side of the road when the enemy came toward the road from the canal. This was before daylight. The enemy was in the ditch on the opposite side of the road, or west side. I moved my first squad to the east and south and while our men in the ditch put up a base of fire the first squad set up a BAR to fire right down the ditch. This knocked hell out of them, and there was no return fire. It was right after this that we met opposition at the Autobahn underpass. The first platoon got through and met the enemy platoon on the other side. They started shooting and the second platoon flanked the enemy by going around them to the south and putting them in a cross fire. Some of the Germans were killed and some were taken prisoner. I had one squad working all that day taking prisoners to the rear. My platoon worked down the left side of the road clearing out houses. We worked from house to house, shooting from one to the next and then sending two or three men ahead. Once you get a toehold in a town, it's easy to clean out the snipers, but you had to do it one house at a time. In HENRICHENBURG the enemy was

I heard an engine start, run a little and stop again. I decided I had better start crawling up the hill.

I crawled up the hill backwards a short distance and then turned around and crawled forward, which was faster. Eventually I got up and ran the rest of the way up the hill toward that clump of trees that Ives mentioned.

When up the hill and walking into the woods, I was challenged by one of our soldiers, "Halt, give the sign." We had a system of being told a new sign and countersign before dark every night for security purposes. The sign and countersign were two words such as "snow storm", if challenged and asked for the sign, one must say, "snow." This would satisfy the one challenging you. There was the possibility that the one challenging was a German, so we could check him out by asking for the countersign. He would then say "storm" which let us know he was a friend.

To my horror I could not remember the sign! Apparently I was in such a distraught state that my mind kind of went blank. I desperately tried to think but just couldn't remember it. I stood there desperately thinking and thinking. He was far enough away from me, in the dark, so that I could not make him out, but I heard him move his rifle as though preparing to fire. He was nervous too. Finally it came to me and I blurted out the sign. I then asked for the countersign like a good soldier should. He directed me into the woods where the others were.

We were in trouble because of an error made by our officers. The 2nd Battalion and F Company, in particular, were in the wrong position for the attack that night. When we became pinned down on that hill, our 2nd Battalion Commander apparently panicked. Edwin Taylor, a runner for F Company Headquarters, was near an officer, a Colonel (possibly the Battalion Commander), when the Germans fired upon us. He overheard him report on his radio that everything is lost or wiped out. He was probably referring to us in F Company.

The situation wasn't really that bad. We were fired upon by one German tank that was either disabled or short of fuel.

The Germans had over extended their supply lines and in some cases were short of fuel and had to limit their activities. Our 2nd Battalion Commander was relieved of his command at 12:00 a.m. that night and replaced with Major Thomas A. Gearhart. In the confusion that night, 1st Rifle Platoon and F Company Headquarters were separated from the remainder of the Company.

William Hannagan seemed to be in a bad way. He had been hit on his right side in the vicinity of his hip or upper leg. The medics were working on him and he appeared to be going into shock or something. He was shivering something awful. Someone said, "He needs another coat, "Lindy", give him yours. I gave him mine." I hesitated. By now I had been so cold such a long time that I panicked with the idea of going through the cold night without my coat. While I pondered, someone else took his off. I felt bad about this. I am sure I would have given him mine - I just had to get used to the idea. I suppose I came across kind of poorly.

We were told to dig in for the night. I dug a slit trench and laid there watching for a possible attack. I didn't get much sleep that night - I don't think any of others did either. About 4:00 A.M. the next morning we moved out.

Hannagan was now quiet. He seemed to be in less pain. The medics had done their job. We improvised a stretcher with two poles and several overcoats tied between them. Now I readily volunteered my coat and offered to help carry him out. Four of us began carrying him. I was one of the two on the rear poles. Joe Pat Ward was one of the men in front. We walked across an open field covered with deep snow. It was very hard carrying a man while plowing through all that snow. We had to go through a fence and almost lost him off the stretcher. It was a long walk so we exchanged carrying duties with other men.

We walked back in the direction that we came from the day before - back by the crushed K Company jeeps and burned out trucks. We walked to a defensive position set up by a group of tankers and a rifle company. They had a field kitchen

WALTROP. In the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry zone, tanks and tank destroyers succeeded in negotiating the canal late in the afternoon, to be employed the next day.

On the right, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry with Company B leading, met heavy artillery, self-propelled gun, small arms, and mortar fire, but reached the outskirts of ICKERN at 0610. The mopping up proceeded slowly because of the large number of enemy troops. The town was invested by 1645. First Lieutenant Henry L. Bruley, Commander, Company B, 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry, tells how the company helped to take ICKERN:

We got artillery and mortar fire in the woods before crossing the ZWEIGKANAL, but not as much as the companies that followed us across, since we moved ahead and out of it as they were coming up. This fire was coming from HAOING HORST. Just across the canal there were two houses with snipers and a machine gun. We took six prisoners out of these houses. We moved toward ICKERN with the Autobahn as our right boundary. At the creek, (722338) we stopped while the artillery put a 15-minute barrage into ICKERN. Then we moved ahead and secured all the bridges along the Autobahn except one. We shot at the German who blew it. The Germans were firing flat trajectory guns at us from the main road leading into ICKERN from the northeast. Company C took care of these guns as we moved through ICKERN, following the Autobahn on the north side. We took the underpass in the southeastern part of ICKERN and secured the Autobahn east of the town, cleaning out a factory. There was some mortar fire from the woods east of ICKERN. We found two half-tracks that had been abandoned. The enemy in the vicinity of the canal had apparently not been able to get word to ICKERN that we were coming. Thus the taking of the town was mainly clearing out houses.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, because of a lack of bridging across the canal, was able to get only Company K off at 0100 as scheduled. The other companies used the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion's crossing site, one half-mile north at MECKINGHOVEN, at 0430. The battalion crossed the EMSCHER Canal at 1500, and put out

## 2. Second Phase

### FIFTH DAY - 4 APRIL

The first phase of the attack had taken the division to the line of the ZWEIG and DORTMUND-EMS Canals. The second phase had as its objective a line running from the LIPPE River south through BRAMBAUER, through ICKERN, to the ZWEIG Canal southeast of RECKLINGHAUSEN. Substantially, this objective was attained in one day.

The vertical embankment of the canal was surmounted by infantry using ladders and ropes. Vehicles were unable to cross during most of the day. The troops crossed the canal on wooden ramps. Once across, a perpendicular 16-foot wall barred their way. 15-foot ladders enabled them to climb this wall. The engineers blew down the canal's concrete embankment, and bulldozers, shoving dirt into the canal eventually provided a causeway.

The resulting ammunition and medical re-supply challenge was met by Division Artillery liaison planes. Led by Major Edward Wolf, Division Artillery Air Officer, the planes landed on an unreconnoitered farm field near the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry command post west of WALTROP. Several round trips were made. On the return trips, wounded were evacuated.

On the left, the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry crossed the canal at 0100, exploiting the small bridgehead Company E had seized and held the night before.

Companies I, L, and K passed through in column meeting sporadic enemy artillery and self-propelled gunfire.

In the center, the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division attacked in a column of companies, changing to companies abreast under heavy enemy artillery fire from high ground east of the canal. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was able to seize part of BRAMBAUER, but the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was stopped short of the town by artillery fire. Sharp fighting was needed to clear

which looked like Heaven to me. This place meant safety. They gave us warm food. It really tasted good. I felt so relieved and comforted to have food in my stomach and to be in a relatively safe place. I had been so frightened and miserable the night before.

We were reissued equipment as many of us left ours on that hill. I left my ammunition bag. Ralph Logan left his mortar. The supply sergeant, Jack Pohlman, didn't have another mortar to replace it. He did have an extra machine gun however, and gave that to us. We were now machine gunners.

This "dream world" didn't last very long. Within a few hours we were given orders to move out again. It was December 26, the day after Christmas. We (the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Platoons) left our friends, the tankers and rifle men, and started back towards the same woods that we had taken refuge in the night before. The 1st Platoon and F Company Headquarters, who had become separated from us the night before, were not with us. They rejoined us about noon.

We walked to the approximate same wooded area overlooking Grandmenil that we had been in the night before. We (F Company) were the left unit of the 2nd Battalion front that adjoined 3rd Battalion, G and E Companies of 3rd Battalion adjoined us.

We were told to get ready to attack again. That made me feel desperate about my situation. I had never been so frightened as I was the night before, and now we were back at it again. I began to wonder how I could take it. I stood there in that woods and prayed to myself. I asked God to help me. I promised to accept the fact that my fate was in his hands. I told myself that death wouldn't be the worst thing.

Death would be better than coming back a cripple and be a burden on Mom or someone else. After this prayer to myself I felt a little better and more willing to accept whatever would happen. Now I only need worry about coming back a cripple. I was no longer depending completely on myself. God was going to help me.

About this time everyone was very frightened. Roy Mitchell heard Capt Oscar Tingley (F Company Commanding Officer) ask for some volunteers to form a scouting patrol to see where the Germans were. No one moved - there was complete silence. He then said no 4th Platoon guys need volunteer as they had too much to carry. Kenneth Tosch broke the ice and volunteered and then others followed.

We walked on a road by Grandmenil. The Germans were in a heavily wooded area beyond Grandmenil. We spread out in attack formation and walked through a woods. Fourth Platoon was left of 3rd Platoon. Frank Maresca and the 3rd Platoon, approached a hedgerow. 1st Lt Myron Markewitz, who was temporarily in charge, took it upon himself to direct 3rd Platoon traffic like an M.P.

About then an American artillery shell landed about 200 ft. to his left. He exclaimed, "What the Hell are they doing! That was close!" A second shell landed on the other side of the hedgerow. Everyone squatted or hit the ground. More shells landed and Markewitz yelled, "Let's get the Hell out of here!" All began running back as the shells began falling on them rapidly.

The shells landed so close behind Maresca, as he ran, that the concussion force pushed him forward - almost knocked him on his face. He ran and ran until his lungs hurt. He and some others got to a road which was not fired upon. He then heard Markewitz call to him and the others. "Come back, come back, your buddies are in trouble. They need you." Maresca and the others stopped. They didn't want to go back but dutifully did.

When he got back he saw a mess. Bernard Tierney, with one eye hanging out, looked back down the road and muttered, "Those no good sons of bitches, those no good sons of bitches." Lt Lamar Monroe with a mangled arm just stared into space. Alfred Leight with his legs blown off sat against a tree and smoked a cigarette. Calvin Cummings was very badly wounded and asked if anyone could help him. He appeared to be dying. Maresca held him in his arms but could do noth-

boundary south, relieving the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions of the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry by 0900. On the right, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry relieved the 134<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division along the ZWEIG Canal by 0625. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry was in division reserve, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion in regimental reserve. Patrols from all regiments crossed the canal to make reconnaissance. The 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, supported by the 202<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Battalion, prepared to bridge the canal on division order after the infantry had established a bridgehead.

A sound truck from Ninth Army, Psychological Warfare, was used to flush prospective prisoners from the far side of the canal. No immediate success was achieved as the few Germans who appeared on the canal bank were driven back by their officers.

Meanwhile, the Ninth and First United States Armies (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Divisions) had met near LIPPSTADT, completing the encirclement of the RUHR, and an estimated 23 German divisions. It now remained for XVI Corps, and elements of First Army, to slash through the resulting pocket and to annihilate or capture all enemy resistance before it could reform and endanger allied communications.

#### FOURTH DAY - 3 APRIL

The division headquarters was moved to ERKENSCHWICK, which had been cleared the day before. The division continued its defense of the west bank of the DORTMUND-EMS Canal and ZWEIG Canal, preparatory to an assault crossing early on 4 April. Finding German defenses on the east bank light, Company E of the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry, on the left, established a bridgehead before daylight 3 April. Company E's third platoon holed up in a barn built like a fort, with slits in the stone walls, suitable for rifle shooting. This was fortunate, for at dawn the platoon discovered enemy soldiers having breakfast in a house across the street from them. In the fire fight that followed, three German enlisted men and one officer were killed. The platoon lost three killed. Prisoners and wounded were evacuated through artillery and mortar fire.

A patrol sent through Company E by Company A came back with 55 prisoners.

Staff Sergeant Alfred J. Williams obtained valuable information on the canal's depth for Company L by an unusual exhibit of fearlessness. Arriving at the point, Williams noticed that there was absolutely no cover from the enemy, who was on the opposite side of the 100-foot canal. The Nazis were sunning themselves, taking care of equipment and writing letters, unaware that they were being watched, or that there were any Americans within miles of the spot. Sergeant Williams, standing up in full view of the startled Germans, carefully selected a branch of the tree nearest the canal, then walked to the canal and dunked the branch gently in the water. The Nazis watched every move. Williams marked the branch at the highest point the water had reached, drew from his pocket a tape measure, and measured it. It was 12 feet - too deep for an infantry crossing. The patrol then withdrew safely, with the information.

In the center, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry extended its

ing. He died while in his arms.

The shells landed in the 3rd Platoon area. They lost so many men that afterward they had to combine with 2nd Platoon to have enough men for a fighting unit. Maresca was told, "Look around for a new buddy."

Later, Joe Pat Ward walked up to where I was digging and asked for some volunteers. He said some men had been hit by artillery and help was needed to carry them out. We should leave our weapons so we could pass as unarmed medics who should not be fired upon. The guys were not quick to volunteer. Joe Pat started to "volunteer" us on his own and looked at me and said, "How about it, 'Lindy'?" I went. I felt naked walking without a weapon. It was quite possible that the Germans wouldn't see that I was not carrying a weapon and acting as a medic. I didn't have the white arm band and white helmet band with large red crosses on them that identified a medic.

As we approached the area I saw a combat boot lying in the path. I thought it must have been an awful explosion to tear a guy's combat boot off. When walking by the boot I was shocked to see a bloody stump of a leg sticking out. We walked on a little further to a small clearing in the woods. I was horrified with what I saw.

There were many dead and wounded men scattered throughout the area - mangled bodies, pieces of flesh, pieces of clothing, weapons, and equipment all over. The most shocking part was that I knew these guys. We had been together since Camp Breckinridge. I didn't know some very well but knew who they were.

The medics and unarmed "volunteers" like me were helping which ever way possible. I just couldn't imagine an artillery barrage could do so much damage. It had been our artillery, so maybe it was worse than the German's.

Afterwards, I went back to where I had been digging in. Everyone was gone! Someone in the woods called out to us, "Follow me." We were very edgy and didn't know if he was one of us or a German who could speak English. We panicked. I

picked up a weapon that had been left behind in a foxhole. La Brusciano was with me. He told me to shoot if the man opens his mouth again. The caller turned out to be one of our men who lead us to where the rest of the guys had moved to. After that artillery barrage the rest of the guys pulled back farther up the hill.

We walked from there to the edge of a woods overlooking a valley in which La Fosse was located. I was walking behind Logan as we approached the edge of the woods. The Germans began shelling us with their 88's. We hit the ground in our tracks when the first shell landed - I hit the ground behind Logan. Another shell landed directly ahead of Logan. It was so close that I felt the concussion and dirt flew up on us. I looked up and saw Logan's back covered with frozen dirt pieces. We were not harmed. Apparently we were in a blind spot - far enough away to not be hurt from the concussion and close enough so that the shrapnel flew over us.

We then set up defensive positions in that area overlooking the valley. We initially dug slit trenches but they gradually became more and more elaborate. We stayed here 4 days and received a lot of intense German Artillery fire. This stimulated our digging and our slit trenches became dug-outs that were large enough to accommodate 2 guys or more.

They were about 4 ft. deep with dirt piled up around the edges. We even made roofs over our dugouts. We placed small tree trunks across the top and piled dirt over them. This roof provided only minimal protection from shrapnel, it would not protect us from shrapnel flying down on us due to tree bursts or close hits. We dug gun ports through the dirt sides.

Digging and constructing these dug outs not only made good protection - it provided therapy. We were doing everything possible for our protection and keeping our minds off the danger and misery. These "fancy" dug-outs also gave us some protection from the cold. The roofs kept the snow off of us. It snowed quite often and the dug-outs became covered with new, fresh white snow. The new snow cover blended them into the surroundings - they became well camouflaged.

on us as we came along the road. The fire was coming from our right front. We had six casualties, two killed and four wounded. Our first and second platoons rushed over a knoll and into the town. The remaining two platoons were pinned down for 50 minutes and finally withdrew to a farmhouse to the rear. They finally got into town at 1500, using the same road. The gunners had withdrawn. All day we received heavy sniper fire from the north part of DATTELN and, machinegun fire from the eastside of the DORTMUND-EMS Canal. The gunners were firing down the streets of the town. On 3 April one rifle platoon from each company in the battalion was detailed to flush the northwest end of the town. They spent the whole day at this task and rounded up 1200 persons, all in civilian clothes. The sniping stopped.

That afternoon the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion reconnoitered a canal crossing over a blown bridge. In the center, a mechanized task force of the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry traversed ALT, OER ERKENSCHWICK, and HORNEBURG and had reached the canal at MECKINGHOVEN by 0120. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalions of the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry reached the canal at 0800, having moved in darkness through wooded areas. That night the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry extended its boundaries south to relieve elements of the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry. On the right the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry reached the canal by 1420. That night the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry relieved the 134<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division of its defense responsibility along the ZWEIG Canal in the vicinity of MECKINGHOVEN.

The town of OER ERKENSCHWICK was passed before daylight, but snipers were still being ferreted out at noon. Elements of the Corps continued on the Division's left across the LIPPE River, and the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on its right paralleled its drive toward the east. The 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry, in division reserve, policed the DIE HAARD Forest for stragglers. The 75<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Troop combed the island between the LIPPE River and the LIPPE SEITEN Canal. Four artillery battalions and the 701<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion, which had participated in the attack so far, were released to XVI Corps.

tank destroyer reconnaissance platoon, one intelligence and reconnaissance platoon, and one battalion medical section with three ambulances, jumped off for the division objective. On the right the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry passed through Combat Command R of the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division at 1000, and continued the attack. It had been relieved as division reserve by the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry of the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at 0600. This gave the division four regimental combat teams, a structure which it was to maintain throughout practically the entire operation. After gaining its objective, the railroad north of RECKLINGHAUSEN, the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry continued the attack with medium tanks carrying infantry (701<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion; Co B, 739<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion (Special)).

Division artillery supported the attack with scheduled fires and requested fire missions. Six enemy tanks in the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry zone north of RECKLINGHAUSEN withdrew under our artillery fire. The Reconnaissance Troop, prior to the relief by the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry at 1000, maintained contact between the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry and Combat Command R of the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. The 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion constructed two 36-foot treadway bridges over streams.

### **THIRD DAY - 2 APRIL**

Despite rain and poor visibility, the division continued its momentum. By 2010 it had swept the enemy from the west bank of the DORTMUND-EMS Canal and shoved patrols across to the east to probe his defensive position. On the left, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry, cleared the northwest section of DATTELN by 0700. The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion consolidated its position along the canal. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion encountered heavy sniping throughout that day and night. 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Stephen G. Lax, Company L, reported:

At 0900 we followed toward DATTELN. Fifteen hundred yards from the town we received heavy artillery and mortar fire from DATTELN. We advanced to within 1200 yards and two German anti-aircraft guns of the 40mm type fired directly

I shared a dug-out with another mortar man. I think it was O.V. Martin. We both had either rifles or carbines. Joe Pat and Logan shared a dug-out. They had the machine gun that the supply sergeant gave us to replace Logan's mortar which he left behind on that side hill Christmas Night.

Our American artillery was awesome. Both the Americans and the German's fired intermittent barrages with pauses in between. The barrages would last about several minutes with a lapse of 5 to 10 minutes in between. I could hear ours going over toward the German lines. First I heard the rumpled explosions of our guns firing in back of us - it kind of sounded like a severe thunderstorm. They were far enough away so their explosions weren't sharp. Then I heard the shells going over. They sounded like many giant whistles. They exploded on the hill across the valley where the Germans were. Maresca thought they sounded like freight trains crashing into a mountain.

After dark their many explosions created an awesome sight. There were so many explosions that they formed a solid sheet of fire in many colors (white, purple, red, and others) across the sky. There was a short lapse of time for the sound to reach us after we saw the flashes but when it did, it sounded like a thunderous roar. Our American fire was much more intense. I wondered how the Germans could survive. They would have to be very well dug in or would all be killed or wounded.

There was no road through the snow and trees to move supplies up to the 2nd Battalion, which included F Company. A road was made with bulldozers December 27. They pushed aside trees, snow, and what have you. We were dug in and positioned in a defensive line between Grandmenil and La Fosse. Third Battalion was on the left of 2nd Battalion either in or in front of Grandmenil.

We, F Company, were the part of 2nd Battalion that adjoined 3rd Battalion so were possibly closer to Grandmenil than La Fosse. Second Battalion was supposed to adjoin 1st Battalion on its right. However, there was a 1,000 yard gap

between the two. About 1:00 a.m. on December 28, the German 2nd Battalion, 23rd Regiment, 12th S.S. Division, came through this gap and advanced to within 500 yards of the 289th Regimental Headquarters at Brisco. The Headquarters had to move to Erezee.

About December 29, Joe Pat told us about it. He said the Germans had attacked an area on our right during the night before. They surprised some of our men in their fox-holes and slit their throats. We should be very alert so it wouldn't happen to us. Gosh! now I had that to worry about also.

The nights were very long this time of the year. It started getting dark about 4:30 p.m. and remained dark until about 7:30 a.m. That night after Joe Pat told us about the Germans infiltrating, I became very worried. I almost started to panic. O.V. Martin and I were in the same dug-out. We took turns standing guard and sleeping. We changed every hour, as we were very tired and could not stay awake much longer.

During my watch I became very nervous. I began to imagine that there were Germans hiding behind about every tree near me. The snow covered trees and surroundings became kind of spooky. I frantically crawled from one dugout porthole or window to another. I feared that someone was sneaking up on my "blind side". I could not get around fast enough.

O.V. Martin who was taking his turn sleeping was awake and watched me. He said, "Lindy, why don't you settle down. There are other guys on guard, on both sides of us and all the way down the line. You have no choice but trust that they will do their job."

The Army referred to this as the "buddy system". We depended on each other to do his part. We were told over and over when in training, that not only our lives but our buddies' depended on how we conducted ourselves when in combat. O.V. went on to say, "You can't fight this war all by yourself. All you can do is watch your area and do the best you can. You have to accept that if your number is up, there is nothing you

## SECOND DAY - 1 APRIL

The Division Headquarters moved from IM LOH to MARL. The Division continued the attack at 0600, with an objective paralleling the DORTMUND-EMS Canal and about midway through the DIE HAARD Forest, to the south of HALTERN.

The 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry on the left, after attaining its objective, cleared the DIE HAARD Forest. Only light resistance was met. Four 88mm and two 75mm guns were overrun. The Reconnaissance Troop, with a platoon of the 744<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion attached, spearheading the attack late in the day, engaged four German tanks near REDDE. No casualties were inflicted or received.

The 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry, in the center, reached its objective by 1140, encountering moderate to heavy small arms and mortar fire. Its progress slowed by blown bridges over SICKINGMUHLE Creek. Captain R. G. Belloir, Commanding Officer Company A, described the Company's crossing:

We met our first opposition near HULS. We got up to the creek that runs north and south just west of the town. This creek is only 10 feet wide, but there were many snipers and, men in dug-in positions on the other side. The tanks were not available, as they were occupied elsewhere. We looked for a crossing site and found a place where men could walk across the creek. We laid down a base of fire and started across, only to find that the opposition had pulled out. This indicated that the purpose of the show was just to delay our advance. We found rifles in some of the houses, also German uniforms. Apparently some of the soldiers had changed into civilians overnight.

At 2350, a 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry, task force, organized by Brigadier General Gerald St. C. Mickle and commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas A. Gearhart, consisting of one motorized rifle company, one machinegun platoon, one medium tank platoon, one tank destroyer platoon, one

have contracted tuberculosis. If any of the laborers refused to work, they were locked up and given no food. The next day they were willing to work.

After capturing the chemical works, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion continued on and captured the town of SICKINGMUHLE. As described by Captain H. C. Chotkowski, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion Headquarters:

Company B assaulted the town on the right with Company F on the left. Both companies received small arms fire and later heavy artillery, mortar, and direct fire from antitank weapons. Company F, after considerable maneuvering, outflanked the town from the north and entered the objective. Company E could not cross SICKINGMUHLE Creek because of a determined defense. Company G was sent to make a deep flanking movement from the right, and both companies entered the village after a fierce fight. Support was given by the heavy weapons company, Company H, and by a company of the 744<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion. The companies set up their defenses for the night in the village. During the fight our artillery knocked out an opposing gun by a direct hit.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry, reached its portion of the division objective by 1500. The 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry seized MARL at 1200 and reached HULS, its objective, at 1830, having encountered direct high velocity fire on its right flank, from the area of 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division.

During the period, the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry was alerted to relieve the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and continue the attack in the latter's zone. By 2130, the 75<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Troop had established contact between Company K on the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry's right flank, and the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division's left flank element, Combat Command R. The 275<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, with the 202<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Battalion in support, cleared, marked, and maintained roads.

can do about it except be ready."

Gosh! that man made sense. I started to pray again. I asked God to help me. I could not do it alone. I prayed that I be willing to submit myself into His hands. There were too many things happening that I had no control over. From now on I would accept His plans for me. I could see from the way things had gone so far that there was no way to predict if, when, and how I would be hit. I would do what I could in accordance with my training to protect myself and be a good soldier, but my survival was in His hands.

I promised that if He should see fit to let me come through this war I would be a good Christian the rest of my life. I guess one is not supposed to bargain with God, but I did. I promised to go to church every Sunday if He should see fit to let me come through this alive and in one piece. That prayer helped. I felt a calm go over my body. My soul and my body became two different things sharing the same place. My body may become wounded or killed but my soul could not be destroyed or eliminated. I sort of became a third person just looking out from my body. I still had emotions and feelings but somehow lost the urgency about my survival. I was able to control my emotions.

The gap between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was partially filled with the 112<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment that was temporarily transferred from the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division to the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. It was able to establish contact with our 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion but was never able to establish contact with us, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, so a gap still remained on our right in which the Germans could pass through at will.

Much of the description on the units involved, battle positions, and movements are from the 75<sup>th</sup> Division combat history on file in the Washington D.C. Archives. Very seldom did I know where we were and what the local or overall battle picture was. We were briefed prior to an attack. We were told what to expect such as how many enemy there were supposed to be in the village, woods, or hill concerned. The names they gave us or we saw on road signs were foreign and hard

to pronounce and so didn't register very well. They didn't with me, that's for sure.

What's more, I really didn't care very much. I was mainly concerned about whether or not I would get through it OK. Most of the time I responded to simple dog like commands, such as "move out", "dig in", "hold up", "set up firing position", "keep your head down", "move forward quietly", and other direct little things like that.

Not until about two weeks after we entered combat did I know that we were fighting in the Battle of the Bulge, the largest single battle representing American soldiers in history. Not until after the war, did I find out that the 75th Infantry Division played an important role in stopping the furthest German penetration into the American lines in the Hugh Bulge.

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These remembrances were taken from Harold Lindstrom's, *A Veteran's Story of World War II*, February, 1990.

## 1. First Phase

### FIRST DAY – 31 MARCH

The division jumped off for its day's objective at 0600, after a 30-minute artillery preparation. The objective was a line running south from the LIPPE SEITEN Canal past the town of DREVE, and just short of the edge of the DIE HAARD Forest. The XIX Corps was north of the LIPPE-SEITEN Canal; the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division was on the division's right. The division attacked with the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry on the right, and the 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry on the left. The 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry (less 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion still with the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division) was in division reserve.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry, captured intact a large synthetic rubber plant north of HULS. The plant was subsequently taken over by a task force from Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force. In the opinion of Lieutenant Colonel Raymond J. Anderson, Division Chemical Officer, the plant will not be operated again. Colonel Anderson's inspections disclosed that erosion and rust had set in on the machinery, because of failure of the crews to remove chemicals when operations were halted.

Two neighboring slave labor camps, containing 3,000 persons, were liberated. One of the laborers, Jose Lopez, tells of conditions at the camp:

I am from Andalusia. I have been working at this factory for 25 months. Before that I was working in France. I was told that I would receive personally 20 marks a month for working at the factory, and that the main part of my salary would be sent to my family in France. They are poor people and needed the money. But I have received letters from my family, and they have not received any money. I was very poorly fed and worked very hard. I worked 12 hours a day shoveling cement. Since I came to the factory I have lost 15 kilos, and have suffered much from the cold. I have rheumatism so badly that I can walk only with great difficulty. Also I

against light opposition the next day. On 29 March the regiment, then attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, moved from behind the latter's armor to take DORSTEN. Fierce fighting was experienced in digging the Germans from their cellars, and the town was badly mauled before it fell.

By 29 March the division had completed its movement to the east bank, and was assembled in the vicinity of HIESFELD, except for elements still guarding the bridges, and for the 290<sup>th</sup> Infantry, which had been attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Armored Division on 27 March. Meanwhile, the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the 8th Armored Division had been advancing slowly east of the RHINE in the area between the LIPPE River on the north, and the RHINE-HERNE Canal on the south, with the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on the north. The 75<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Troop reconnoitered routes to the forward assembly area in the vicinity of IM LOH, where the division completed concentration by 1200 on 30 March.

The Corps attack order - Field Order Number 14 - issued at 1700, projected a continuation of the Corps attack on the axis already begun, toward and across the DORTMUND-EMS Canal where it ran parallel to the RHINE River. The enemy order of battle, as disclosed in the Intelligence Annex to the Field Order, indicated that the principal opposition in the division zone would be the 116<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division, composed of the 16<sup>th</sup> Panzer Grenadier Regiment in the north, the 156<sup>th</sup> Panzer Grenadier Regiment in the center, and the 116<sup>th</sup> Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion in the south, in addition to reported elements of the 180<sup>th</sup> Division and of nine other miscellaneous units.

## **Combat**

### **Battle in the Ardennes**

#### **24 DECEMBER - 24 JANUARY**

Ideally, a new division's introduction to combat should be a relatively easy one, but Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt's December offensive in the Ardennes presented such a threat to the Allied cause that the 75th Infantry Division was obliged to start combat with the toughest fight encountered in the whole war in the west. During its month in The Bulge – the first half on the defensive, the second half on the offensive - the 75th Infantry Division won its spurs by helping to smash the German advance and by retaking the ground that had been lost. The rookie division had become seasoned in a battle described by Prime Minister Churchill on 19 January 1945 as one that would live forever as a famous American victory.

The Ardennes Mountains extend over broken terrain characterized by deep ravines, narrow valleys, and steep hills, with numerous intervening small streams and cross-compartments. Much of the area is heavily forested, largely with fir trees. Blinding snow storms, with subsequent drifting, added to the terrain difficulties. Snowdrifts often filled ravines so as to make them unnoticeable until men and equipment disappeared from sight. The snow hampered movement, and enabled personnel and equipment to be easily spotted, especially at night. Minefields laid in the snow were difficult to detect. While a few good roads existed along the routes through the larger towns, most often difficult secondary roads had to be used.

During the first phase, 24 December – 14 January, some of the Division's major elements were attached elsewhere, in piecemeal fashion in order to stem the Nazi break through toward LIEGE, BRUSSELS, and ANTWERP.

During the second phase, 15 - 24 January, the 75th Infantry Division took part in the XVIII Airborne Corps' coordinated attack to retake ST. VITH and its vital road net. The Division's role in the battle - to cross the SALM River to capture VIELSALM - was a classic example of the double envelopment. The 291st Infantry on the north, attacked and seized the high ground north of the city; the 289th Infantry attacked and seized the high ground south of the city. Thus the whole valley became untenable for the enemy, and he withdrew. A patrol from the 2d Battalion, 291st Infantry, discovered the withdrawal, and Corps was requested to block the upper end of the valley with troops in the vicinity. Determined resistance by the enemy held the corridor open, and the withdrawal continued under fire. The Germans then began a series of delaying actions which characterized the rest of the battle.

The division's achievements were measured in ground held and ground gained rather than in striking enemy losses. Nevertheless, 1142 prisoners of war had passed through the division's care by 24 January, and six tanks and much other materiel were destroyed.

Our own losses were heavy. During the period 24 December - 24 January, the Division suffered 407 killed, 1707 wounded and 334 missing. The intense cold proved as serious an antagonist as the enemy. Non-battle casualties, largely trench foot, frostbite, and cold injury, accounted for 2623 casualties. The men were not fully prepared for severe winter warfare. Shoepacks had not yet arrived and the available overshoes frequently filled with snow. Gloves were not in adequate supply. Because of the constant fighting, wet clothing was difficult to replace.

On his retirement as Division Commander on 24 January, Major General Fay B. Prickett left this message to all officers and men of the division: Upon being ordered to other duty, I desire to express my deep appreciation for the loyal support rendered to me and the devotion to duty displayed by all officers and men of this division. You have met the enemy under the most difficult conditions of terrain and weather, and

on an enemy rubber boat and forced it to withdraw; of 17 March, when Company A, 290th Infantry, killed two and captured one of a three-man patrol; and of 22 March, where a seven-man patrol in the 190th Infantry sector was entirely killed or captured.

Our own patrols to the enemy shore during the period 10 to 24 March were as successful as the enemy's were unproductive. Of the more than 30 patrols organized by the three regiments, 19 were able to produce valuable enemy intelligence, including information of enemy strength, dugouts, trenches, pillboxes, wire, observation posts, 88mm guns, anti-aircraft, machine gun, mortar and artillery positions. Several enemy prisoners were taken. These operations were made hazardous by the river itself, with its cold waters and swift currents; by enemy searchlights; and, by enemy counter-patrol activities. As a result, several of the patrols suffered casualties.

On 24 March, the division supported the river crossings of the 30th and 79th Infantry Division's in the vicinity of ORSOY by artillery and heavy weapons fire, and with smoke furnished by the attached Provisional Smoke Generator Company. Division Artillery fired 26,999 rounds during the preparation, in which 52 artillery battalions participated. Bridges G and H across the RHINE had been completed, the 290th Infantry was charged with their security and deployed a battalion in defensive positions on the east shore. The 291st Infantry assumed responsibility for the security of L and N bridges on 26 March. Attempts of the 275th Engineers Battalion to launch a boom as protection against enemy craft, swimmers, and other saboteurs were frustrated when enemy artillery fire cut the moorings. The location of the boom was finally changed to just south of N bridge where it was completed. The 440th Antiaircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion was active in anti-aircraft protection in the division area, downing two enemy planes on 27 March.

The 290th Infantry was attached to the 30th Infantry Division on 26 March. The 1st Battalion cleared the HUNXE area

attack of your division with the bulk of the best troops available to him in this area. In spite of this fact, plus a series of extremely difficult obstacles, your division advanced rapidly and consistently in your zone of action and by its aggressiveness and determination completed a mission which it had been estimated, would require a much longer period of time.

4. I am proud of the accomplishments of your division and feel that I have been fortunate in having had its services available to me during the operations that have now been completed. I wish you and every member of your division every success in the missions that may be assigned to you in the future.

#### **BEFORE THE ATTACK 10 MARCH - 3 APRIL**

On 10 March, the division occupied a sector on the west bank of the Rhine, from opposite DUISBERG on the south to opposite WESEL on the north. Its mission was to defend the west bank against enemy attack or patrol activities, to guard communication lines, utilities, bridges, and culverts, to improve the defensive positions, to dispatch night patrols to the east shore in order to discover the enemy strength, order of battle, and the terrain situation. Material assistance in performing the internal security mission was received from the 15<sup>th</sup> Belgian Fusilier Battalion.

If the RHINE crossing was to have the advantage of surprise, the preparations of the assault divisions had to be screened from the enemy. This necessitated intercepting enemy patrols which might cross the RHINE for the purpose of collecting data on the build up. During the division's stay on the west bank, not one of the ten German patrols engaged by our troops was able to return to its lines. Typical encounters were those of 16 March, when Company I, 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry, fired

in spite of suffering hardship and determined resistance, you have overcome all obstacles and won a splendid victory. I congratulate you on your achievement. I wish each and every one of you continued success, the privilege of even greater achievement and a safe return to your loved ones. I look with confidence to the future of this great fighting division and am sure that its history will be enriched with victory.

### **I. The Defensive Phase**

#### **GOING INTO ACTION 1 - 23 DECEMBER**

Their training finished, the 75th Infantry Division regiments left Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky, on 15 October 1944, and embarked from Camp Shanks, New York, on 22 October, landing in England on 3 November. Division artillery embarked on 15 November, landing on 22 November. Training and assembly of equipment highlighted the division's stay in the United Kingdom. The move across the Channel in LSTs took place 10 December. Meanwhile, an advance detachment from division, Division Artillery, and Regimental Headquarters had joined the 29th Infantry Division, near JULICH, GERMANY, for a fortnight's study of staff procedures under actual combat conditions.

From YVETOT, near LE HAVRE, the division entrained for WILJRE, NETHERLANDS, a destination subsequently changed to TONGRES, BELGIUM. The infantry made this 250-mile trip in the traditional Hommes 40 - Chevaux 8 box cars, while the motorized elements traveled by road. The Ninth United States Army, to which the division had been attached, had planned an operation for the division in the GEILENKIRCHEN sector in Germany. But the German breakthrough in BELGIUM necessitated the attachment of the division to VII Corps of the First United States Army. By 2400 on 22 December, the division Command Post had opened and the units assembled at OCQUIER, BELGIUM.

The German counter-offensive was advancing rapidly. By 24 December, the salient bypassing BASTOGNE, had thrust toward MARCHE with an estimated strength of two armies - the 5th and 6th Panzer. The 5th Panzer Army, whose Artillery Commander, Lieutenant General Metz, was captured by the 75th Infantry Division in WESTPHALIA in April 1945, consisted of the 5th Panzer and the 5th Infantry Divisions. On 24 December tank-infantry attacks by the 116th Panzer Division were being made in the vicinity of HOTTON and SOY.

### **GRANDMENIL 24 - 26 DECEMBER**

The German threat demanded immediate action. There was insufficient time for the division to execute essential reconnaissance and move forward as a unit; consequently, the VII Corps Commander on 23 and 24 December attached Combat Team 290 and Combat Team 289 to the 3d Armored Division. The remaining tactical elements of the division outposted along L'OURTHE River between BOMAL and GRANDMENIL.

Combat Team 290 was directed to move south from the HOTTON - SOY road to a defensive line along the BLIER - HAMPTEAU sector, and Combat Team 289 to occupy a defensive line between GRANDMENIL and BLIER. On 24 December the 2d Battalion of the 291st Infantry was attached to the 2d Armored Division, while the remainder of Combat Team 291 was ordered to move to a new assembly area in the vicinity of SOMMELEUZE, BELGIUM, as VII Corps reserve.

Combat Team 290 initially met little resistance. It cleared the HOTTON - SOY road of the enemy, pushed south, and by 2400 on 25 December had reached its objective (The line: BLIER - HAMPTEAU). The heaviest resistance was met in the advance toward HAMPTEAU. Near the village of WERPIN, the enemy was entrenched on a high hill which controlled the HOTTON - HAMPTEAU road. It was necessary to cross an open field 300 yards wide in order to reach this objective. Company K made a frontal attack, but was pinned down by enemy machine gun fire with great loss. Then, supported by

Major General John B. Anderson, XVI Corps Commander, on 16 April commended the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division's Commanding General as follows:

1. Upon the completion of your mission of driving the enemy south of the Ruhr River, I wish to extend to you, and through you, to all your officers and men, my commendation and appreciation of the success achieved by the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in the missions that have been assigned to them during the period of its attachment to the XVI Corps.

2. The successful crossing of the Rhine by this Corps was, in no small measure, due to the effective screening by your division of the movements of troops and supplies in the rear areas of the Corps prior to D-Day. In addition, aggressive patrolling, constant observation, and the activities of your intelligence agencies contributed a mass of information regarding the enemy situation and installations that was of inestimable value to the assault divisions. After the crossing, our division was given a multitude of missions which from your point of view, may have been considered unimportant and unspectacular. However, all these missions again contributed in a high degree to the success of the Corps by assisting in the rapid expansion of its bridgehead east of the Rhine.

3. As the advance of the Corps lost some of its initial impetus, your division was given a combat mission, to continue the attack to the east and southeast to assist in enlarging the bridgehead and in clearing the enemy from the Ruhr industrial area north of the Ruhr River. The enemy chose to resist the

were under division control - 874 French, 6 Belgian, 5 Polish, and 1247 Russian. For hundreds of Catholic prisoners at a camp in ICKERN, Lieutenant Colonel John D. Duggan, Division Chaplain, 11 April said the first mass they had attended in three years. Uncounted thousands of displaced persons of all nationalities were uncovered by the division's advance.

The Supreme Commander on 20 April issued this order of the day:

To every member of the AEF: The battle of the Ruhr has ended with complete success. Following hard upon the final destruction of the German forces west of the Rhine, the Twenty-first Army Group thrust powerfully across that river with the US Ninth Army under its command. Simultaneously, rapid drives across the Rhine and from the Remagen bridgehead by Twelfth and Sixth Army Groups provided the southern arm of a great double envelopment which completely encircled, the entire German Army Group B and two Corps of Army Group H, whose mobility was rendered almost zero by our magnificent and tireless air forces. Thereafter, in the pocket thus created the Twelfth Army Group eliminated twenty-one German divisions, including three Panzer, one Panzer Grenadier and three Parachute divisions. Over three hundred seventeen thousand prisoners of war were captured including twenty-four Generals and one Admiral. Infantry tanks and more than seven hundred fifty gains were destroyed or taken. Booty is immense and still being counted. The enemy's total loss in killed and wounded will never be accurately known.

The rapidity and determination with which this brilliant action was executed tore asunder the divisions of Field Marshal Model, and enabled all army groups without pause to continue their drive eastward into the heart of Germany.

This victory of allied arms is a fitting prelude to the final battle to crush the ragged remnants of Hitler's armies of the west, now tottering on the threshold of defeat.

(Signed)  
Dwight D. EISENHOWER

supplemental flank attacks by Companies I and L, Company K attacked again and drove the enemy from his position. This ended the threat to HOTTON and marked the highwater mark of the German drive northward toward LIEGE. Many acts of heroism were performed by the officers and men of Companies K, I, and L in taking this hill.

The 289th Infantry was attached to Combat Command B of the 3d Armored Division, and was given the mission of seizing, organizing, and defending a frontage of approximately 10,000 yards in the very heavily wooded area running south and east from GRANDMENIL to EREZEE. The regiment was ordered to attack at 0800 on 25 December, with battalions abreast. While dismounting from trucks in the assembly area on the eastern flank of the regiment, the 3d Battalion was hit by German tanks which had succeeded in breaking through elements of the 3d and 7th Armored Divisions east of GRANDMENIL. A bazooka man from Company K scored a hit on a German tank and stopped this attack. The three battalions advanced against light opposition, but due to wide frontages and thick woods were unable to establish contact during the night of December 25-26. Early in the evening the 3d Battalion received orders to be prepared to assist elements of the 3d Armored Division in the capture of GRANDMENIL. On the morning of 26 December, the entire battalion was detached from the regiment and attached to Combat Command B for the attack on GRANDMENIL, which it spearheaded. By late afternoon of 26 December, the town had been taken. The battalion, after reverting to regimental control, defended GRANDMENIL.

## SS SPLITS THE 289TH INFANTRY

**27 DECEMBER - 1 JANUARY**

During this period (27 December - 1 January) all operations except those of Division Special Troops were outside division control. On 27 December the division was attached to XVIII Airborne Corps, and the command post moved to VILLERS ST. GERTRUDE, BELGIUM. Combat Teams 289 and 290 remained attached to the 3d Armored Division, but all other division units moved to the new assembly area. The 2d Battalion, 291st Infantry, released from the 2d Armored Division, moved to the new area on 28 December, and dug in on the hills south of ST. GERTRUDE where they remained until 29 December.

During the evening of 27 December the 1st Battalion, 289th Infantry was attacked on its left flank by elements of a Volks Grenadier regiment, which made a slight penetration. A counter attack restored the original position. As the 1st Battalion was extending its line to the west shortly after midnight to gain contact with the 2d Battalion, elements of the 25th and 26th Panzer Regiments of the 12th Panzer Division filtered between the two battalions and penetrated to SADZOT before strong counter attacks stopped them.

At 2400 the 75th Division Artillery with other battalions with the corps presented a New Year's Greeting to Adolf. Every gun in twenty corps battalions, calibers ranging from 105mm to 240mm, fired three rounds into enemy territory. Six artillery battalions were, at this time, under the command of Brigadier General A. C. Stanford, Division Artillery Commander.

New Year's Day was generally inactive. The enemy withdrew south across the AISNE River, and was observed digging in. Our patrols mopped up pockets down to the river. The 291st Infantry relieved elements of the 7th Armored Division in the GRANDMENIL - MANHAY sector on 29 December, and the 517th Parachute Infantry Battalion at MANHAY

into strong points, and furnishing cover for snipers. It bristled with anti-aircraft weapons capable of use against ground targets. Finally, first class troops of the 116<sup>th</sup> Panzer, 180<sup>th</sup>, 190<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Para Divisions were deployed in the area.

To accomplish the divisions mission called for the highest exertions of all arms. Basically, the job of seizing and holding was one for the infantry. But both close and general support was constantly supplied by the artillery, augmented by additional battalions from Corps; by the tanks and tank destroyers; and by the air support, which contributed numerous strikes. The engineers had to prepare canal crossings to make up for the more than 50 bridges blown by the retreating Germans. Because of the relative absence of any enemy air activity, the anti-aircraft battalion's normal mission was denied it; but it served, when needed, in the line as infantry.

Enemy losses were severe. 3,654 enemy prisoners of war passed through the division's cage during the period 31 March to 15 April, and dead and wounded well exceeded this figure. Furthermore, many of the 14,173 prisoners of war taken through 16 April to 21 May, during the division's occupational phase, had had the starch taken out of them in the RUHR campaign. Enemy losses in materiel, particularly flak guns, antitank guns, tanks, self-propelled weapons, artillery, machineguns, mortars, trains and vehicles, were equally costly.

By contrast, the division's losses were light. During the period, casualties of 150 killed, 841 wounded, and 32 missing, for a total of 1053, were incurred by the division and attached units. Battle losses of materiel included one 20-ton semi-trailer, one 6-ton truck, four M136 motor carriages (90mm TD), one medium tank, one 105mm assault gun, 6 tanks damaged, and two SCR 536 radios.

The nonmilitary aspects of the campaign were so conducted as to let the troops go unimpeded on their way. G-5 set up military government in the wake of battle, and no civilian disturbances were encountered once an area had been seized. As of 16 April, 2132 liberated Allied prisoners of war

tions were damaged, but injury to personnel was slight. Eleven ME 262 enemy aircraft attacked in the afternoon without inflicting appreciable damage. Movement to the rest area in LUNEVILLE was completed by 12 February. Here the division rested until 15 February. The division reached PANNINGEN, HOLLAND, on 20 February. Here, under command of the VIII Corps of the British Second Army, the division went into a defensive position along the west bank of the MAAS River. Successful patrols across the MAAS River were operated every night. On 4 March the division moved to an area about VENLO, HOLLAND, and on 10 March relieved other units of the XVI Corps along the RHINE. After nearly a month's absence, the division had returned to the RHINE River, this time on German soil.

### **BATTLE FOR THE RUHR 31 MARCH - 15 APRIL**

In the battle of Germany, no single portion bulks larger than the drive to neutralize the RUHR. The RUHR Valley is the most highly concentrated industrial area in Europe. With a pre-war population of more than four million, it produced eighty percent of Germany's coal, iron, and steel, and most of its chemicals and synthetic rubber. Its loss would prevent the Reich from long continuing the war.

The task of eliminating the RUHR fell to the Ninth Army's XVI Corps. Carrying out the Corps plan, the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, during the period 31 March - 15 April, advanced east from the RHINE past the DORTMUND-EMS Canal, then swung south and reached the RUHR River, isolating DORTMUND and contributing to the obliteration of the RUHR pocket.

The operation was carried out against formidable obstacles. The gravelly plateau on which the Division fought has numerous heavy forests, limiting fields of fire. It is interlaced by a system of canals averaging ten feet in depth and 100 feet in width, with steep banks. It contains many villages, cities, and industrial plants, all capable of conversion

on 2 January. The 1st Battalion was shelled by about 75 rounds of artillery and mortar fire at 1445 on 1 January. The 289th Infantry reverted to division control on 29 December. Combat Team 290 remained on the defense, attached to 3d Armored Division.

The Division reverted to VII Corps at 0900 on 2 January. At 1500 Company F of the 289th Infantry attacked from CROIX ST. JEANNE south against a German company occupying the heights west of VEIUX-FORNEAUX. After a stubborn fire fight, Company F withdrew to enable Division Artillery fire to fall on the entrenched enemy position. The artillery fire started at 1800 and continued during the night.

### **STARTING THE ATTACK 2 JANUARY - 7 JANUARY**

At 1800 on 2 January, the long awaited Corps order for the Americans to attack in The Bulge was received. Our intelligence believed that plans for an immediate offensive by the Sixth Panzer Army against the west flank of the salient had been shelved until the attacks by the Third United States Army on the salient's south flank at BASTOGNE could be checked. The 1st SS Panzer Division had already been shifted to that area. If the Germans attempted to pull the Sixth Panzer Army out of The Bulge, the opportunity to annihilate it must be seized. Accordingly, the VII Corps was to jump off at 0830 on 3 January and seize the area HOUFFALIZE - BORIGNY. The 2d Armored Division was to spearhead the attack, supported by 3d Armored, 84th Infantry, and 83d Infantry Divisions. The 84th Infantry Division, with Combat Team 290 attached, was ordered to attack in support of the 2d Armored Division to protect the right flank of the Corps and block all enemy movement across L'OURTHE River. The remainder of the 75th Infantry Division was ordered to secure its front lines and assist by fire the initial attack of the 2d and 3d Armored Divisions. After our lines were passed, the division was ordered to be prepared to assemble in reserve.

The 289th Infantry prepared for the attack by removing

anti-tank and anti-personnel mines in its sector. At 1300 on 3 January, Company F of the 289th Infantry attacked dug-in enemy positions south of VEIUX - FORNEAUX. One enemy pocket was wiped out by grenades, but strong automatic weapons fire stopped the advance, and the company fell back to dug-in positions. Company G, 112th Infantry (attached) attacked at the same time to envelop the east flank of the enemy, but was stopped by heavy mortar and machine gun fire. The remainder of the 289th Infantry screened the advance of the 2d Armored Division by defensive action.

The 290th Infantry, attached to the 84th Infantry Division, cleared mine fields and roadblocks, and supported the attack with fire. The 291st Infantry screened the advance of the 3d Armor and 83d Infantry Divisions by holding its line at MANHAY. By 1150 on 3 January the battle had passed beyond the view of the 291st Infantry, although the regiment was still subjected to harassing mortar fire.

On 4 January most of the division-controlled units were out of contact with the enemy. During the day the 83d and 84th Infantry Divisions passed through the 75th Infantry Division sector and continued to attack south. Some resistance from by-passed German units continued in the sector of the 289th Infantry, south of VEIUX-FORNEAU. The 289th Infantry, with one company of the 750th Tank Battalion, one battery of the 440th Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion, a company of the 772d Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 2d Battalion of the 112th Infantry with 6 medium tanks, all attached, attacked German positions from the northwest. By 1130 the hostile positions were overrun, but mopping up of the sector continued throughout the afternoon. Enemy losses were two prisoners and fifty dead. The 3d Battalion of the 289th Infantry, previously in the vicinity of GRANDMENIL, relieved the 2d Battalion, 112th Infantry, in the sector by 1730. The 289th Infantry, with the 897th Field Artillery Battalion in direct support, continued to defend the sector GRANDMENIL - AMONINES down to the AISNE River on its southwest flank.

Throughout the day the 290th Infantry, attached to the

## TO THE RHINE 6 - 7 FEBRUARY

The important fortified city of NEUF-BRISACH was captured by the 3d Infantry Division at 1400 on 6 February. During the day the division boundaries and objectives were changed by Corps order, and preparations were made to effect a crossing of the RHONE-RHINE Canal. The 289th Infantry sent patrols to the canal, and encountered considerable small arms fire from the west bank. The 1st Battalion made contact with the 190th Infantry at DESSENHEIM. The 2d Battalion of the 290th Infantry, heavily supported by the tanks, attacked toward WECKOLSHEIM at 1115. Little resistance was met, and Company G rode the tanks into the town, occupied it at 1245, and established defensive positions along the west side of the canal. The photomaps had again proved a great help in the attack. The 291st Infantry remained in division reserve in the vicinity of WOLFGANTZEN, BIESHEIM, and OBERSAASHEIM. During the day a total of 236 prisoners were taken.

On 7 February the 289th and 290th Infantry Regiments crossed the RHONE-RHINE Canal, and occupied the villages of HETTENN and OBERSAASHEIM without opposition. The 290th Infantry Command Post in the latter town was strafed by several ME 262's, but without casualties. Late in the evening of 7 February, elements of the 3d Battalion, 290th Infantry, reached the line of the RHINE River without encountering any hostile force, and established outposts and roadblocks. The enemy had been driven out of FRANCE! Sergeant Clyde L. Dodson, Company I, 290th Infantry, led the first patrol to reach the RHINE River.

## FROM RHINE TO RHINE 8 FEBRUARY - 10 MARCH

On 8 February, the division was relieved along the RHINE by elements of the 28th Infantry Division. Prior to relief, heavy artillery fire was received from the east bank. Communica-

with the butt of his rifle. He then refused to be evacuated and chose to stay with his men.

The 289th Infantry remained in position, making, reconnaissance and plans for offensive action. The 3d Battalion, 290th Infantry, supported by Companies E and G of the same regiment prepared to attack WECKOLSHEIM. The use of aerial photomaps of the town, divided into lettered assault sectors, materially assisted in planning this operation.

### **WOLFGANTZEN AND APPENWIHR FALL - 5 FEBRUARY**

During 5 February the division succeeded in securing APPENWIHR, WOLFGANTZEN, and HETTENSCHLAG. In the APPENWIHR-HETTENSCHLAG area, which was defended by elements of the 305 VolksGrenadier Regiment and the 198th Division, patrols observed enemy activity early that morning. At 0645 attacking elements of the 289th Infantry moved south. Leading elements were permitted to reach the outskirts of the village of APPENWIHR before the enemy commenced firing with small arms and mortar. In the attack the 1st and 2d Battalions encountered anti-tank and anti-personnel mines and booby traps on all approaches to the town, delaying the advance considerably. The 1st Battalion, supported by Companies B and D of the 709th Tank Battalion, and Company A of the 772d Tank Destroyer Battalion, secured the town at 0950. On being ejected from APPENWIHR, the enemy retired to his next delaying position in HETTENSCHLAG, which was taken by the 2d Battalion at 2000. The 289th Infantry's speed and firepower had thus severed all important roads south and southeast of COLMAR.

In capturing WOLFGANTZEN from the north, the 291st Infantry took the enemy completely by surprise. All enemy defensive positions were prepared in the south and western edge of the town, where the enemy expected the attack. At 1500 Company C moved rapidly down the canal on the left, hitting the town from the north, while Company A, accompanied by tanks, came in from the west. All resistance ceased by 1730.

84th Infantry Division, continued to support the advance and to patrol the surrounding area with the mission of occupying and securing strong points. The attack jumped off in its sector at 0800, but progressed slowly because of strong resistance, poor visibility, snow, and extreme cold. The 1st Battalion at the close of the period occupied a position in the vicinity of MAGESTER. The 2d Battalion continued to occupy the sector west of AMONINES. The 3d Battalion had the assigned mission of patrolling to the front and making contact with 335th Infantry at BEFFE.

The tactical situation remained substantially the same during 5 and 6 January. The 75th Infantry Division, less Combat Team 290, was placed in First Army reserve, and on 6 January the division less Combat Teams 289 and 290 moved into an assembly area with its command post in the vicinity of MARCHE-THEUX. Combat Team 289 remained in position until further orders. In conjunction with the planned attack of the 2d Armored Division, Companies G and K, 289th Infantry, attacked southwest at 1615 on 5 January, while Companies E and F of the regiment attacked to seize and occupy the AISNE River line. By 2400 the river line had been secured. The destruction and rout of the enemy's powerful attack was complete.

The 290th Infantry, attached to the 84th Infantry Division, continued its attack in the northwest sector of The Bulge. On 5 January, Company G occupied BEFFE. On 6 January, the 3d Battalion moved in and occupied DEVANTAVE; Company B arrived and occupied the ground west of BEFFE to L'OURTHE River. The remainder of the 1st and 2d Battalions continued to maintain contact with the enemy and to determine his strength.

The 290th Infantry was relieved from positions along the AISNE River on 7 January, and closed in the division assembly area at 2400. By this time all units under division control had closed in this area, except the 730th Field Artillery Battalion, which was unable to negotiate the icy roads. The situation in the 290th Infantry's sector remained substantially

the same during 7 January. The 2d Battalion was assembled in the woods east of MAGOSTER. The 3d Battalion remained on a defensive position in and around DEVANTAVE and supported elements of the 84th Infantry Division in their attack. The 1st Battalion continued its advance, crossing the line of departure at 1030, but moved only a few hundred yards before it was pinned down by enemy fire. Enemy resistance prevented the battalion from reaching its objective.

### **CLOSING ON THE SALM RIVER 8 JANUARY -14 JANUARY**

On 8 January the Division was ordered to relieve the 82d Airborne Division in the western sector of the XVIII Airborne Corps along the SALM River. That day the 82d Airborne Division attacked the enemy position from the west down the THIERS DEL PREUS - THIER DUMONT Ridges. This attack initially surprised the enemy; but he reacted stubbornly, employing infantry, tanks, and considerable artillery and nebelwerfer fire in a vain effort to hold his position in this sector. He retired slowly southwest, leaving pockets of resistance along the south bank of the SALM River opposite GRAND HALLEUX and from RENCHEUX to SALMCHATEAU. The enemy in this sector consisted of elements of the 2d Battalion, 753d Regiment, 326th Infantry Division.

On 9 January the Division command post moved to the 82d Airborne Division sector at HAUTE BODEUX. All units of the division (less Combat Team 290) initiated the movement to the forward assembly area preparatory to the relief.

Combat Team 290, still attached to the 84th Infantry Division on 9 January, organized defensive positions and outposts on the objective secured the previous day. 3d Battalion patrols tried to cut the LAROCHE-SAMREE road, but met strong enemy automatic weapons, mortar, and artillery fire, and were unable to complete the mission. Three enlisted men were killed and ninety-four wounded, sixteen prisoners from the 60th Panzer Regiment and 62d Engineer Battalion were

taining its original positions in the vicinity of HORBOURG, and maintained contact with the 28th Infantry Division. The 290th Infantry remained in reserve, dispatching heavy patrols to complete contact with the 289th Infantry on the right and the 291st Infantry on the left. The 3d Battalion attacked, with the 291st Infantry on the left, at 1600, but the advance was halted almost immediately by heavy artillery fire.

The principal effort was made by the 291st Infantry, heavily supported by Division Artillery, which fired a total of 2,831 rounds on the towns of WOLFGANTZEN and APPENWIHR. The 1st Battalion attacked at 1300 from the woods northwest of WOLFGANTZEN. After advancing 300 yards over open ground, the battalion received heavy mortar and artillery fire. Darkness prohibited further movement by the battalion, but preparations were made to attack at dawn the following day. The 3d Battalion, attacking at the same time, advanced to the WOLFGANTZEN-

APPENWIHR road, where further advance was halted by darkness and enemy resistance.

General Le Clerc, French Second Armored Division Commander, visited Division war room at 1415.

### **CONTINUING THE ATTACK - 4 FEBRUARY**

On 4 February the front line elements made small gains against heavy resistance.

The 291st Infantry, advancing through the woods, encountered strong enemy positions, including dugouts reinforced with concrete. The advance of the 3d Battalion toward WOLFGANTZEN was halted by intense artillery, mortar, and small arms fire. A squad of Company I, led by Staff Sergeant Samuel W. Cathcart was given the mission of eliminating certain enemy machine gun nests. Displaying brilliant leadership as he maneuvered his squad to obliterate this strongpoint, Sergeant Cathcart personally rushed the German machine gun and, despite a wounded arm, routed the Germans. After running out of ammunition, he killed the remaining enemy soldier

the vicinity of BISCHWIHR, and the 1st and 2d Battalions relieved the 289th Infantry. The 3d Battalion of the 290th Infantry protected the division's right flank along L'ILL River.

The 291st Infantry in its positions gained the previous day, reorganized its defenses and patrolled vigorously to the front. Staff Sergeant Lonnie D. Rister of Company B heroically gave his life on this day. Company B was making an attack through a wooded area when it ran into severe machine gun and direct 88mm fire. Seeing his platoon leader a casualty, Sergeant Rister assumed command of the platoon. Advancing at its head he charged directly into the enemy position. This act cost him his life, but enabled his platoon to clear the way for the rest of the company and thus to hold its advanced position until additional help could arrive. His supreme sacrifice has since become a legend in the history of Company B.

The Division Command Post opened at BISCHWIHR at 1200. In the attack on APPENWIHR, the Division Artillery, with attached units, fired a total of 2,672 rounds of ammunition. There was considerable aerial activity throughout the afternoon including two straffings of the Division Command Post. Battery B of the 440th Antiaircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion successfully engaged an ME 262 jet propelled plane at 1430 over the town of RIEDWIHR. This was one of very few recorded destructions of this type of plane.

In the attack on COLMAR by the French, the 75th Infantry Division staged an important screening demonstration along the east bank of L'ILL, River, with heavy artillery fire and a feinted bridge operation.

### **WOLFGANTZEN AND APPENWIHR - 3 FEBRUARY**

On 3 February the 3d Infantry Division continued its advance on the Fortress City of NEUF-BRISACH on the RHINE River. The 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division made its main effort along its left flank, with the city of WOLFGANTZEN as the objective.

The 289th Infantry spent the day in improving and main-

captured.

On 10 January neither the division nor the 82d Airborne Division were in firm contact with the enemy. The 82d Airborne Division continued to receive scattered artillery fire from the vicinity of SALMCHATEAU and VIELSALM. By 2400 the division had, with minor exceptions, relieved the 82d Airborne Division. On the same day Combat Team 290 was relieved from attachment to the 84th Infantry Division and was enroute to the assembly area near the division command post at HAUTE BODEUX. It closed in its assembly area at 0300 on 11 January, and was held in division reserve.

During the period 12 - 14 January the situation remained relatively static. The division strengthened its positions along the SALM River, continued its patrols to the east, and improved the bridgehead across the SALM River previously established by the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of GRAND HALLEUX. At 1300 on 12 January Company L of the 291st Infantry successfully attacked the high ground west of ENNAL, but at 1700 received a counter attack that drove two squads off their objective. These heights were regained 13 January. At this time the area south of the objective was reconnoitered and found to be untenable.

The enemy was very sensitive to division patrols throughout 13 January. A patrol led by Lieutenant Miskel of the 75th Reconnaissance Troop was ambushed in the area between VIELSALM and SALMCHATEAU, sustaining serious casualties.

A lone enemy plane bombed and strafed a mess building at the division command post at approximately 1930 on 14 January, the 730th Field Artillery command post at 1930, and the 899th Field Artillery command post at 1915. At the division command post Lieutenant Colonel Ralph L. Lowther, Division Signal Officer, and four enlisted men were killed. One officer and ten enlisted men were wounded.

## 2. The Salm River Offensive

### VIELSALM 15 - 17 JANUARY

Thus far the division had been contributing most of its strength to other divisions in the Allied effort to stem the breakthrough into Belgium. Now together for the first time, the 75th Infantry Division was ready for offensive operations. At 1914 on 14 January, the Division Commander called the Chief of Staff, Colonel H. B. Powell, from the XVIII Airborne Corps command post and issued the order: The division attacks tomorrow, 15 January 1945. Hour of attack - 289th Infantry, 0300; 291st Infantry, 0800. Field Order Number 7, setting forth the plan of attack, was prepared by Lieutenant Colonel Robert C. Dean, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, that evening.

The enemy had skillfully organized his defensive positions along the east bank of the SALM River. In the vicinity of the village of HOUT he was entrenched heavily, with numerous bunkers built from timber, covered with earth, and camouflaged with snow. Each bunker contained three to four men with automatic weapons. Stone buildings and cellars were being effectively used in the towns of VIELSALM, SALMCHATEAU, and BECH. VIELSALM itself was situated in a terrain corridor flanked on either side by high ground. The concentration of enemy strength suggested the division plan of attack: a double envelopment of VIELSALM from north and south. The enemy forces in this sector consisted of elements of three regiments of the 326th Volks Grenadier Division, plus remnants of the 62d Volks Grenadier Division.

On 14 January our forces were generally along the west bank of the SALM River, except in the vicinity of GRAND HALLEUX on the north, where the 517th Parachute Regiment, while attached to the 82d Airborne Division, had effected a bridgehead into that town. The division sector extended from LA NEUVILLE on the east bank of the SALM River, in the north, down to the vicinity of PROVEDROUX, on the west bank of

vance of Combat Command 4.

The 75th Infantry Division met heavy resistance. While the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 289th Infantry, improved and maintained its previous positions in the vicinity of HORBOURG, the 2d and 3d Battalions attacked the town of APPENWIHR. Overcoming stubborn enemy resistance, the 2d Battalion entered and was clearing the town. At 1055 the enemy launched a counterattack from the south and southwest, with an estimated 12 tanks and 200 infantry. The counterattack was preceded by one of the heaviest artillery preparations yet experienced by our troops, and at 1100 the battalion pulled back into the nearby woods to enable friendly artillery fire to fall on the town. The 3d Battalion had the same experience, and both battalions were relieved by the 290th Infantry. Upon completion of the relief by the 290th Infantry, Company I of the 289th Infantry prepared to occupy a defensive line to the east of ANDOLSHEIM and covered mine laying operations of the Division Engineers in the vicinity of SUND HOFFEN.

In the APPENWIHR counterattack against the 2d Battalion, the attached medical personnel of the 289th Infantry were especially heroic. Captain (then First Lieutenant) William T. Leslie and Technician Fifth Grade William I. Sloane were awarded Silver Star Medals for gallantry in action. Lieutenant Leslie had set up his aid station in support of the attack on APPENWIHR. During the counter attack it became necessary to withdraw and casualties were heavy. Lieutenant Leslie, accompanied by Sloane, entered the town during the height of the counterattack to render on-the-spot medical attention and to evacuate the wounded. Organizing the aid men into a mobile aid station, he and his group went from house to house throughout the town, treating casualties and placing the transportable cases on the truck. Enemy artillery landed nearby at this time killed one and seriously wounded another aid man. The truck full of wounded was evacuated, and Lieutenant Leslie and Sloane left the town on foot. In returning to his unit, this gallant officer was seriously wounded by mortar fire.

The 290th Infantry was moved from division reserve in

This heroic action, for which Schwarz received the Silver Star Medal, enabled his company to continue its advance and take its objective.

Later that day the 1st Battalion again encountered enemy tanks, capturing one. The battalion was forced to establish defensive positions prior to continuing the attack south. While the attack on the city of FORTSCHWIHR was in progress, Technical Sergeant Odilo Bonde, together with members of his ammunition and pioneer platoon, were resting momentarily on the side of the road when they were informed by tankmen that Germans were believed to be in a nearby woods. Sergeant Bonde, with two of his men, immediately advanced towards the woods and routed a German, who surrendered. Bonde then went again into the woods, from which he emerged a short time later with 23 Germans whom he had induced to surrender. Sergeant Bonde was awarded the Silver Star Medal for his gallantry.

The 3d Battalion, initially in reserve, was committed to drive out suspected self-propelled guns in the woods, thereby assisting the remainder of the regiment and the 289th Infantry.

Throughout the day the Division Artillery, supported by the 969<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion and 440th Antiaircraft Artillery (Automatic Weapons) Battalion, aided the attack with 45 direct support missions and 14 harassing, interdiction, and miscellaneous missions, expending 1,706 rounds of ammunition.

Combat Command 4 was relieved from attachment later in the day. Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General, Sixth Army Group, visited Division Headquarters.

### **COLMAR FOREST - 2 FEBRUARY**

On 2 February, the 3d Infantry Division on the left, continued to attack in the sector between the RHONE-RHINE Canal and the RHINE River. Combat Command 4 of the French 5th Armored Division, on the right, captured COLMAR and five villages. The 28th Infantry Division followed up the ad-

the SALM, in the south. The 291st Infantry occupied the northern sector from LA NEUVILLE to a point north of VIELSALM and RENCHEUX. The 289th Infantry occupied the remainder of the sector, from a point north of VIELSALM to a point south of PROVEDROUX.

The 290th Infantry was held in division reserve; the 3d Battalion in the northern sector, the 1st Battalion in the southern sector, and the 2d Battalion in the rear at BASSE BODEUX. The 3d Armored Division and the 83d Infantry Division were attacking to the southeast on the 75th Infantry Division's right flank. The 106th Infantry Division (less two Regimental Combat Teams), which had jumped off on an attack to the south on 13 January 1945, continued its attack in the zone between the SALM River and the 30th Infantry Division. The 75th Infantry Division's attack smashed across the SALM River as scheduled on 15 January under cover of darkness, and the important towns of BECH and SALMCHATEAU were seized.

The 2d Battalion, 289th Infantry began crossing the river at 0340 at a point just north of PROVEDROUX, and by 0614 all elements of the battalion were across. The battalion, after bypassing SALMCHATEAU, swung north toward BECH supported by heavy artillery fire, and at 0850 Company E was at the edge of the town of BECH. Companies F and G, overcoming fanatical resistance, pushed into the town, and by 1500 the 2d Battalion was in complete control of BECH. In this engagement the 2d Battalion lost approximately fifty men killed and wounded, and captured approximately eighty prisoners. Upon completion of this operation, F Company swung northwest toward SALMCHATEAU to assist the 3d Battalion in capturing that town.

By 1950 the 3d Battalion had complete control of SALMCHATEAU and bridging operations by the 275th Engineer (Combat) Battalion and the 51st Engineer (Combat) Battalion were in progress. The 1st Battalion of the 289th Infantry began its crossing at 0630, turned south, and attacked the high ground southeast of BECH. The high ground to the immediate east of the SALM River was not occupied by the en-

emy, and the first shots fired were from the village of BECH. However, the area southeast of BECH was strongly defended, and the 1st Battalion was hit by a heavy artillery concentration which stopped its advance. By 1740 defensive positions for the night had been prepared. The 1st Battalion of the 290th Infantry relieved the 1st Battalion, 291st Infantry, and one company of the 289th Infantry by 0300. Upon the accomplishment of this mission, the battalion made a diverting feint between SALMCHATEAU and a point about 2000 yards north of VIELSALM, continuing the feint until daylight.

The 291st Infantry attacked at 0730 to seize the high ground north of VIELSALM and thus complete the double envelopment. The 1st Battalion attacked in the right sector and advanced approximately 1500 yards when Company A on the left was caught in a draw by enemy fire which prohibited further advance. When the company was pinned down, Private First Class Clarence C. Morrill, a messenger, volunteered to reach his company command post. Private Morrill crossed an open stretch of terrain, where he came upon a wire fence which at that moment was cut by an enemy machine gun burst. He went through the opening in the fence, reached his command post, and returned with needed assistance. For this heroic action he was awarded the Silver Star Medal.

The 2d Battalion attacked on the left, and advanced over open ground for approximately 400 yards before meeting resistance which impeded further progress. In the course of this action, Company H was running out of ammunition. Private Luther W. Mason, an ammunition bearer, traveled a distance of 500 yards clearly visible to hostile observation and in spite of heavy machine gun, artillery, and small arms fire, brought back vitally needed ammunition. His company was entrenched in a defilade position and the enemy was delivering heavy fire. Private Mason repeated this process several times, redoubling his loads and his trips after several other ammunition bearers had become casualties, and eventually manned a gun himself. He was also awarded the Silver Star Medal.

Division, and completed house-to-house mopping up operations against stubborn resistance. Snipers installed in the church steeple were cleared by destroying the steeple with a bazooka. By 1500 the town was cleared of all enemy, and 40 prisoners had been captured. The 2d Battalion, 289th Infantry, closed into WIHR-EN-PLAINE at 0300, relieving the 3d Infantry Division there, and at 0700 attacked to the south in conjunction with the 3d Battalion and Combat Command 4 of the French 5th Armored Division. After a heavy artillery preparation the important cross roads in the town of ANDOLSHEIM was cleared of all enemy by 1400, and the town was garrisoned by the 2d Battalion until relieved by Company C at 2100 that night. When the relief was completed, the 2d Battalion advanced south toward APPENWIHR. The 3d Battalion, after clearing ANDOLSHEIM, moved to an area northeast of the town, reorganized, and moved south abreast the 3d Battalion of the 291st Infantry.

The attack of the 291st Infantry was spearheaded by the 2d Battalion. Initially, this battalion met only slight resistance and advanced rapidly. Resistance gradually increased until 1400 when the enemy counter attacked with 3 Mark VI Tiger tanks and infantry from the 19th Assault Battalion. By 1730 the battalion had repulsed the counter attack, knocked out one tank, reorganized, and continued the advance south toward the ANDOLSHEIM-NEUF-BRISACH road. The enemy stopped the battalion from crossing the road by heavy self-propelled gun fire.

The 1st Battalion followed the 2d in the initial attack, and then side-slipped to the left, continuing to advance south. Company A ran into several Mark VI tanks, but with the assistance of one platoon of the 709<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion overcame the resistance and continued south. When, shortly after, Company A was slowed by heavy enemy machine gun fire, Staff Sergeant Erich Schwarz ordered his men to cover him, seized several hand grenades, and ran across an open field to the vicinity of the enemy strongpoint. With great skill, he threw the grenades, destroyed the pill box, and killed one of the enemy.

to French First Army for operations; and to Seventh United States Army for administration and supplies.

The XXI Corps consisted of the 3d Infantry Division, 28th Infantry Division, 75th Infantry Division, and 5th French Armored Division. As part of the French First Army's drive to wipe out organized German resistance west of the RHINE in the COLMAR pocket, the corps objective was to seize NEUF-BRISACH, block the RHINE, and maintain contact in the VOSGES Mountains. The 75th Infantry Division was ordered to pass through and relieve elements of the 3d Infantry Division, continue the attack to seize the line HORBOURG - ANDOLSHEIM - APPENWIHR - WOLF-GANTZEN, and prevent the enemy from crossing L'ILL River. The 289<sup>th</sup> and 291st Infantry Regiments were to attack, with the 290th Infantry in division reserve. Pursuant to these orders, the 289th Infantry completed movement of the foot elements to the forward assembly area in the woods north of REIDWIHR, closing at approximately 1100 on 29 January. The 290th Infantry, in reserve, assembled in the wooded area northeast of OSTHEIM.

At 2000 on 30 January the forward echelon of the Division Command Post opened in a wooded area northwest of BISCHWIHR. The 3d Infantry Division, which had launched an attack across the COLMAR Canal on 29 January, seized the towns of JEBSHEIM, BISCHWIHR, MUTZENHEIM, WIHR, and FORTSCHWIHR. Since the town of WIHR-EN-PLAIN had not yet been cleared of the enemy on 31 January, the hour of attack for the 75th Infantry Division was changed from 31 January to 1 February at 0700. Relief of the 3d Infantry Division in the sector was completed prior to 2330 on 31 January.

### **ANDOLSHEIM - 1 FEBRUARY**

The attack jumped off as scheduled at 0700, with the 289th and 291<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiments abreast. The 3d Infantry Division was on the left flank, with the 28th Infantry Division echeloned to the right rear. The 1st Battalion, 289th Infantry, attacked HORBOURG, previously attacked by the 3d Infantry

The 3d Battalion remained in position in the vicinity of GRAND HALLEUX, protecting the rear of the regiment, but at the same time it gained contact with the 424th Infantry, 106th Infantry Division, to the north as the latter regiment took ENNAL.

On the second day of the attack, 16 January, the enemy continued to resist the 75th Infantry Division's advance with varying degrees of intensity. The 291st and the 289th Infantry Regiments continued the attack, knocking out one enemy tank and capturing approximately 110 prisoners. During this time the engineers completed the Bailey bridge across the river at SALMCHATEAU. The 290th Infantry remained in division reserve, with the exception of the 1st Battalion, which continued to hold and defend the sector along the SALM River west of VIELSALM. The Division Artillery fired a ten-minute preparation in support of the attack of the 291st Infantry, and thereafter, throughout the day, gave continuous support to the division attack, firing a total of 1,887 rounds for that period.

By 17 January the relentless attack of the 75th Infantry Division had broken through the enemy resistance very decisively. At 0215 17 January the German forces comprising about 100 men of the 753d Regiment, plus about 90 men of the 190th Replacement Battalion, withdrew from the vicinity of VIELSALM toward BURTONVILLE by way of NEUVILLE, leaving a covering force of one squad for each company in the vicinity of VIELSALM. This covering force withdrew at 0400 and broke contact with our forces, leaving one squad at the horseshoe bend of the railroad near NEUVILLE to cover the withdrawal. Mines were laid on all sides of VIELSALM prior to the withdrawal. At 1155 the Commanding General of the XVIII Airborne Corps telephoned the following message to the Division Commander: I understand that you are having an extremely favorable condition in your sector. I want that situation exploited to the limit of physical capacity. Push out small groups with automatic weapons fire. Secondly, block passage to the south. This is an opportunity for your division to make a name for itself. Keep me informed.

The division pushed on. The 289th Infantry improved its previous positions and then moved on north and south from BECH. The 2d Battalion advanced north from BECH at 0400 and cleared the ridge southeast of NEUVILLE. The 3d Battalion moved southeast of BECH to positions in the vicinity of the westerly edge of GRAND BOIS (forest) about 2000 yards north of ROGERY.

The 291st Infantry, supported by a heavy artillery barrage, advanced in its entire zone. Patrols into VIELSALM during the hours of darkness found it unoccupied. A change of plans permitted the 290th Infantry to enter the town, whereupon the 1st Battalion, 291st Infantry, occupied the villages of PRIESMONG and VILLE DU BOIS. This attack was spearheaded by Company C under the command of Captain Allan L. Bogardus, who personally led the 1st platoon of his company into the attack. When the advance was pinned down by heavy enemy fire, Captain Bogardus called for artillery. His instructions to the artillery were so accurate that the latter was able to place a virtual curtain of fire in front of his unit, enabling Company C to complete its mission of capturing a high point without loss of a single man. Again, when Company C was pinned down by small arms fire, Captain Bogardus maneuvered the platoon into position, returned the fire, and neutralized the enemy power. For this action Captain Bogardus was awarded the Silver Star.

The 1st Battalion moved into and occupied the town of VIELSALM at 1400, and after being passed through by the 3d Battalion, moved northeast to take VILLE DU BOIS and PETITE-THIER. From there it continued northeast and east to the crossroads at PATTEAUX. At the close of the period, the battalion had started sweeping the woods to the southwest. The 3d Battalion, passing through VIELSALM, occupied NEUVILLE at 1710. At that point it reorganized and continued the attack to BURTONVILLE, where it was in position at the close of the period. The Engineers in the interim constructed a 50-foot Bailey bridge at VIELSALM.

## THE LONG JOURNEY 25 - 31 JANUARY 1945

The division's month of cold and combat in the ARDENNES had earned it a rest, but on 25 January the proposed rest period near LIEGE was cancelled. The entire division was ordered to move to the Seventh United States Army area south of STPASBOURG, France. Rail movement of the infantry and a portion of the rear echelon commenced the afternoon of 26 January from PEPINSTER, BELGIUM, southeast of LIEGE. Those moving by rail were transported to LUNEVILLE, FRANCE, approximately 25 miles southeast of NANCY, and from there by truck to the new assembly area. The move by rail was completed in approximately two days.

The motor movement of all the motorized elements of the division, including Division Headquarters, commenced at 0800 on 27 January. Approximately 8,000 men and over 1,400 vehicles moved from BELGIUM to FRANCE. The move started in VIELSALM and vicinity and proceeded north of TROIS PONTS, BELGIUM, thence south through HOTTON, MARCHE, and ROCHEFORT, BELGIUM, to SEDAN, FRANCE. The trip through France, except for the severe cold, was extremely interesting. Elements of the Maginot Line as well as such famous World War I battlegrounds as VERDUN and ST. MIHIEL were passed enroute. The movement to the new assembly area from ST. MIHIEL commenced at 1500 on 28 January and proceeded through NANCY, LUNEVILLE, ST. DIE and thence across the VOSGES Mountains to the village of REBEAUVILLE in ALSACE, FRANCE. Most of the journey was completed with strict blackout driving. Continuous and heavy snowfalls made the roads dangerous and slippery, but all the convoys negotiated the journey over the mountains without serious mishap. The Division Command Post opened at RIBEAUVILLE at 0300 on 29 January. That morning at 0500 the enemy placed a few rounds of heavy artillery within 50 yards of its front door.

The same day the division was attached to XXI Corps;

Command Post and the enemy across the L'ILL River.

General De Lattre De Tassigny, Commanding General of the First French Army, commended the prowess of troops in the COLMAR battle on 8 February: I do not wish to await the end of this bitter and victorious struggle to tell you my happiness and my gratitude. For nearly three weeks, I have not allowed you any respite, and night and day have ordered you harshly and endlessly En Avant! This had to be done! No task was more imperative nor more lofty than saving STRASBOURG and finally liberating ALSACE. No task was more fruitful in military and political consequences. No task was more worthy of your generosity and your sacrifices.

You understood this, and covered with mud, numb with cold, exhausted, you found in yourselves the supreme strength necessary to overcome the desperate resistance of the enemy. Thanks to you, my beloved American comrades, who have brought us your courage and who have spared nothing to help us - neither your arms nor your blood.

As for you, my beloved French comrades, you will be able to claim with just pride that you have been the builders of a great national event of which our children will speak with feeling and respect. All the divisions of the army of liberation participated, and each, with its own force and with equal love for France, has gloriously marked its part of the battlefield. The German has been driven from the sacred soil of France. He will never return!

Other commendations were received from Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General, Sixth Army Group, on 9 February, and from Major General F. W. Milburn, Commanding General, XXI Corps, on 10 February. The Division Commander on 11 February commended all officers and men for their splendid performance, but warned that, though the battle was won, new and greater efforts would be necessary to win the war.

Enemy prisoners of war taken during the period amounted to 515. Our own battle casualties were 105 killed, 430 wounded and 132 missing, with non-battle casualties 591.

## GRAND BOIS 18 - 21 JANUARY

Throughout 18 January advances were slowed down by enemy fire. The 289th Infantry spent the day in improving positions established the previous day. The 2d Battalion made plans for an attack on 19 January to clear the woods northeast of THIER DES CARRIERES. The 290th Infantry started attacks with its 1st and 2d Battalions, but almost immediately met enemy fire which prevented further progress. The 3d Battalion occupied a portion of BURTONVILLE, but heavy small arms, machinegun, and mortar fire on the high ground east and southeast of the town made the town untenable. The 291st Infantry established perimeter defenses around VILLE DU BOIS and PETITE-THIER, and maintained the roadblock in the vicinity of PATTEAUX against heavy mortar and artillery fire. The 2d Battalion, 291st infantry, which had relieved the 2d Battalion, 290th Infantry, at the road block in PATTEAUX was relieved by the 3d Battalion, 517th Parachute Infantry, at 2000.

In the course of relieving the 2d Battalion, 290th Infantry, the 2d Battalion, 291st Infantry, encountered a murderous artillery and mortar barrage at the crossroads. Rifle and machine gun fire was also very heavy, and soon direct fire from enemy tanks was being placed on the crossroads. A direct hit upon one of our tank destroyers started a fire which ignited ammunition near the battalion aid station, further endangering battalion troops. Lieutenant Colonel Jesse C. Drain, Jr., Battalion Commander, personally supervised the removal of the vehicle, and then assisted the aid men in removing the wounded to a place of safety. For this heroic action Lieutenant Colonel Drain was awarded the Silver Star Medal.

One enemy tank was destroyed by the division in the area south of PATTEAUX, and 144 prisoners captured, bringing the total for the four day offensive to 733. The morale of the prisoners in most cases was extremely low. They complained bitterly of the lack of food and the general inadequacy of supplies. Prisoners of war of the Volks Grenadier units com-

plained that the SS units were always withdrawing when danger was imminent. All prisoners of war talked freely, and the Division G-2, Lieutenant Colonel George C. Dewey, was therefore able to establish an accurate picture of the order of battle, morale, strength, equipment, and supply difficulties.

The village of VIELSALM was heavily mined when the enemy withdrew. Fortunately, a prisoner captured by Company C of the 290th Infantry had an accurate map of the mines and booby traps. On checking, the Division Engineer found the information on the maps remarkably accurate, and turned them over to the second and third platoons of Company C, 275th Engineers, led by Lieutenant Frank J. Streno and Lieutenant L. B. Johnson, respectively. On their way to the minefield, they stopped to pick up a prisoner from the Prisoner of War cage who had helped to lay the mines, and who cheerfully agreed to help neutralize the menace. With this aid, the work was completed quickly and without casualties. In addition the second platoon had the satisfaction of discovering a new type of mine in the enemy installation.

On 19 January the enemy was fighting from well-constructed entrenchments in islands of resistance throughout the GRAND BOIS, a heavily wooded sector of the famous ARDENNES forest. Intermittent snows kept the ground covered knee deep. The enemy was camouflaged by white capes, while our soldiers were dressed in ordinary OD uniforms. Prisoners of war stated that our soldiers were visible from a distance and easy to hit.

That day the Division Command Post moved from ABREFONTAINE to VIELSALM. During the night the 291st Infantry moved back into a reserve position. The 289th Infantry, with the 1st Battalion 291st Infantry attached, continued to advance up to its new objective throughout the day, meeting stubborn enemy resistance consisting of small arms, artillery, and mortar fire in the 3d Battalion area. The 2d Battalion cleared the woods northeast of THIER DES CARRIERS, then attacked south against heavy resistance, reaching their objective south of THIER DES CARRIERS. Upon being relieved

## **TH The Colmar Pocket**

**1 - 7 FEBRUARY 1945**

To the people of France, the continued German hold on the COLMAR district of ALSACE was an intolerable threat to national pride and security. The French First Army was accordingly directed to liquidate the pocket. The 75th Infantry Division, battle hardened by its month in the ARDENNES, was assigned to assist in this mission.

The battle of COLMAR was characterized by the peculiarity of the terrain. The RHINE PLAIN at this point is about seven miles wide, the greater portion lying on the west side of the RHINE. High mountains overlook the plain from both sides of the river and are intervisible. Excellent enemy artillery observation into the valley is provided by these mountains. Cover in the plain is provided by deciduous forests and villages. Short range cover is provided by a slight rolling of the ground. The action began with about a foot of snow covering the plain, and one to ten feet lying in the mountains. It was completed in a mid-winter thaw that resulted in severe flooding. After the thaw, tank action was not bogged down because tanks sunk through 8 to 12 inches of topsoil mud to a gravel bed underneath.

The mission of the division was to cover the right flank of the 3d Infantry Division in its drive south along the RHINE. The most advanced elements of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division were several thousand yards northwest of COLMAR, and the most advanced elements of the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division several thousand yards southeast of COLMAR. The picture was presented of a division attacking with its left and center, and having its right echeloned to the rear in a line that grew thinner and thinner as the division progressed. Never, until the latter days of the engagement, did the rear elements of the division have more than a few infantrymen between themselves and the enemy, and on one occasion the defense platoon and the reconnaissance troop were all that lay between the Division

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by the 1st Battalion, 291st Infantry, the 2d Battalion moved by motor to RENCHEUX, BELGIUM, for rest and reorganization, and was joined there by the remainder of the regiment the following day. The American Red Cross opened a small lounge in town, and with the aid of civilian girls supplied hot coffee and doughnuts, writing paper, radios and a phonograph.

The principal activity for this period occurred in the 290th Infantry sector east of BURTONVILLE. During the previous night, Companies I and L dug in, in anticipation of a planned attack by our forces the next morning. During the night camouflaged enemy snipers took up positions in the woods. In the morning, as our units prepared to attack, the snipers opened fire from all directions. At the same time, approximately 60 - 70 enemy infantry and 5 tanks attacked. Three companies were forced to withdraw approximately 1000 yards before they reorganized, counter-attacked, and drove the enemy out.

In the same area Company G assisted in clearing a farmhouse which was defended by 5 tanks, heavy mortars, 75mm and 88mm fire, as well as an undetermined number of infantry. Three tanks of the attached 750th Tank Battalion moved into position to eliminate the enemy, who was firing from hidden positions. One of the Sherman tanks was hit point blank and set afire; others were forced to retreat. When the tank was hit, three badly wounded tankmen managed to escape, but collapsed nearby. Private Carlo J. Salvo, medical aid man with Company G, ran forward through the intense enemy fire, administered first aid to the wounded soldiers, and assisted them to cover. He then returned to the blazing tank, where he aided two more wounded soldiers, although during the entire period he was under excellent enemy observation and continuous fire. For this action. Private Salvo was awarded the Silver Star Medal. Following this, Company G withdrew 200 yards, established defensive positions, and under cover of darkness secured a direct hit upon a Tiger tank. The projectile bounced off the tank, but the vehicle was apparently damaged, as it was soon towed away. Company G, after repeated attempts, finally overran the area at 2300, finding au-

tomatic weapons, mortars, self-propelled and horse-drawn artillery and tanks, two of which were reported knocked out. During these attacks and counter attacks only 27 enemy prisoners were captured, but the ground was covered with enemy dead.

FERME DES FLAMANDS was the last toehold the enemy had in the GRAND BOIS. He offered slight resistance to the 290th Infantry south of that sector, and in the early morning, of 21 January he completely broke contact with our assaulting regiments. Patrols were sent out to reestablish contact. Meanwhile, the 291st Infantry replaced the remaining elements of the 289th Infantry, all of which reassembled in the RENCHEUX area, where reorganization and rehabilitation continued. With the 290th and 291st in the front lines, plans were then formulated for further offensive action.

### **BRAUNLAUF, MALDLNGEN, AND ALDRINGEN 22 - 24 JANUARY**

The division started a new attack the morning of 22 January. The 30th Infantry Division on our left flank, and the 84th Infantry Division on our right, were attacking south and southeast.

The 290th Infantry attacking at 0800 overcame strong enemy resistance. Elements of the 750th Tank Battalion (attached) knocked out several machine gun nests. The 2d Battalion encountered heavy automatic weapons and mortar fire in the woods west of KAPELLE, which prevented further advance.

The 291st Infantry attacked through the woods. Company C, in the lead, encountered three dug-in tanks, with undetermined infantry protection, and drove them out with the loss of one of our tanks. The town of COMMANSTER was attacked and seized at 1335 by Company B, supported by one platoon of Company C, 750th Tank Battalion.

The division's objectives in the attack were the towns

of BRAUNLAUF, MALDINGEN and ALDRINGEN. Buildings and cellars were being used by the enemy for protection against our artillery concentrations as well as for defensive positions. Anti-personnel mines and booby traps in wooded areas further delayed our advance. The 289th Infantry passed through the 290th Infantry, which moved to the rear for rest and rehabilitation at RENCHEUX. The 1st Battalion, 289th Infantry, attacked toward BRAUNLAUF. After first sending patrols into the town and encountering heavy enemy resistance, the entire battalion stormed the town and took possession at 2255. The 291st Infantry attacked in the direction of MALDINGEN and ALDRINGEN. The 1st Battalion took MALDINGEN in spite of heavy artillery fire. At dark Company B, 291st Infantry was at the edge of the town, while two other companies went through the town in a house-to-house grenade action which destroyed all enemy resistance. The 3d Battalion had patrols in the vicinity of ALDRINGEN. The 3d Battalion, 289th Infantry, assisted in taking and mopping up MALDINGEN. In the entire engagement 49 enemy prisoners were captured and heavy casualties were inflicted.

The attack against ALDRINGEN continued through 24 January. Companies F, I, and K of the 291st Infantry attacked the town at 1300. Heavy resistance from the town prevented its capture during daylight, but, under cover of darkness, the 3d Battalion moved into town, and by hard street fighting, sniping, and hand-to-hand combat forced the enemy from the town to the southeast. Other units of the division mopped up and established perimeter defenses in BRAUNLAUF and MALDINGEN. The 290th Infantry remained in division reserve.

The capture of ALDRINGEN severed the vital north-south spoke of the ST. VITH road hub. With the ARDENNES salient no longer in being, and the Germans driven back toward the Siegfried Line, the battle of The Bulge was over.

On 24 January Major General Ray E. Porter relieved Major General Fay B. Prickett as Division Commander, and Colonel Charles L. Dasher, Jr., relieved Brigadier General A. C. Stanford as Division Artillery Commander.